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**Memorialisation and Metapoetics in Paul Celan's
Translations of French Surrealist Poetry**

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PhD

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Abstract

Contrary to assumptions within existing scholarship on Paul Celan's poetics, this thesis demonstrates that surrealist aesthetics were a significant discourse within Celan's poetics, in particular in the theories articulated in his Büchner Prize speech (1960). By mapping the points of convergence and divergence between specific surrealist ideas and particular elements of Celan's poetics, it demonstrates that the most significant point of contact between the two sets of aesthetics lies in the surrealist idea of a sustained tension between the unconscious and conscious realms, and between the past and the present, which elucidates Celan's well-known 'meridian' metaphor. The study thus develops new interpretations of Celan's theories, in particular in its assertion of the primacy of unconscious impulses in Celan's view of poetic language. Its conclusions thereby impact on an understanding not only of the specific status of the surrealist discourse in Celan's aesthetics, but also of the shifting relationship between poetic language and the poet's and readers' conscious and unconscious realities; and of the intentional and unintentional cultural encounters that impact on linguistic and literary signification.

The inquiry focuses on verifiable and concrete points of contact between Celan's writings and surrealist texts, in the form of his translations of surrealist poems, his poetological notes and his correspondence. Recently published correspondence and theoretical writings by Celan reveal that he considered poetry to be composed in part as a result of unconscious impulses, which become visible during translation. Close readings of Celan's versions of surrealist poems demonstrate that these translations both illustrate and thematise this textual Unconscious, and so exhibit the metapoetic content of Celan's translations. By focusing in particular on the surrealist aspects of the original poems translated by Celan, and on Celan's transformation of these features into metapoetic figures, these readings therefore demonstrate the poetological significance of Celan's encounter with surrealism, and culminate in a new conceptualisation of his poetics of translation.

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Introduction

In an interview published in the German newspaper *Die Welt* in January 1958, the German-language poet Paul Celan (1920-1970) characterised his writing process thus:

Ich erlebe es. Aber ich versuche nicht etwa, Erlebnisse zu beschreiben. Ich versuche, das mir Zufallende auszumessen. Ich versuche, mich zu orientieren. Natürlich geht es mir um Wirklichkeit – um meine eigene zunächst. Aber darin ist viel enthalten ...¹

The interviewer subsequently cites Celan's description of poetry as 'ein Sprechen "unter dem besonderen Neigungswinkel einer Existenz"'. These words invite readers of Celan's poetry to interpret his work through reference to Celan's wider context, whereby the phrase 'das ihm Zufallende' conveys both a sense of responsibility and of the unexpected, random nature of the encounter. Yet the final phrase, 'Aber darin ist viel enthalten', indicates the diverse nature of the reality to which Celan refers, encouraging readers to continue trying to comprehend the nature of his particular context. This reality not only consists of Celan's specific life experience but also includes an array of cultural and historical coordinates. And as implied by the ellipsis at the end of Celan's final phrase, the full extent of this range of associations remains unspecified.

It is the allusiveness of Celan's writing, coupled with his oblique mode of expression, that renders his poetry of immediate and central relevance to contemporary European culture and identity. On the one hand, Celan's life experience includes three of the defining events of the twentieth century: the Second World War, the Holocaust, and exile. On the other hand, he engages with a great range of literary, philosophical and scientific

¹ Harry Neumann, 'Wir sprachen mit dem Preisträger Celan', *Die Welt*, 27 January 1958, p. 5.

discourses and texts that go far beyond these specific historical events. As such, Celan's oeuvre is located at the point at which two spheres of reference intersect: his writings are inextricably linked to the specific events and experiences that have shaped contemporary European identity; and at the same time his work has roots in discourses and traditions that range across continents and centuries. To explore these roots is therefore to examine the nature of cultural encounter, the impact of war, genocide and exile on linguistic expression, and the scope and limits of language itself. Consequently, Celan's phrase 'darin ist viel enthalten ...' elliptically conveys the basis of his oeuvre's continued urgency and significance.

Just as Celan suggests that his writing process arises from the attempt to assess his experience, so it is by investigating Celan's position in relation to this reality that the contours of his unique poetic expression may be measured. As such, Celan's writings have been considered, *inter alia*, in the context of surrealism, existentialism, French symbolism, Russian acmeism and the philosophy of Martin Buber and of Martin Heidegger. As Leonard Olschner argues, Celan's aesthetics are not to be understood through reference to only one of these possible modes: 'Die Dinge sind etwas vertrackt und nicht durch schlichte Modelle zu erklären'.² Rather, a more profound understanding of Celan's oeuvre arises from the consideration of the many ways in which his writing interacts with a variety of such 'models'. Access to Celan's literary estate, now held at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA) in Marbach am Neckar, has afforded insights into Celan's reception of his range of impulses. Much of Celan's correspondence, published and unpublished manuscripts, drafts of his poetry and poetological writings and the contents of his personal library are now available, enabling detailed research into Celan's

² Leonard Olschner, 'Poetiksplitter des nicht abgelegten Exils. Paul Celans Bremer Rede (1958)', in *Ästhetiken des Exils*, ed. by Helga Schreckenberger (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 365-85 (p. 381).

textual sources, into the impact of personal encounters on his work and into his compositional processes, which has led to significant advances in the interpretation of Celan's writings. This thesis contributes to this ongoing investigation by analysing Celan's encounters with French surrealist works, demonstrating that Celan's reception of surrealist themes and structures (be it assimilation, re-working or rejection) produces valuable new insights into his poetry and poetics.

Celan's status as a post-Holocaust poet has particularly impacted on considerations of the role of historical reality in his oeuvre, which in turn have influenced research into connections between his work and the surrealist movement. Celan's interest in surrealism while he was growing up in Czernowitz, and his involvement with surrealist groups in Bucharest and Vienna in the mid to late 1940s, are well documented and undisputed.³ But the extent to which this engagement left its mark on Celan's poetry and poetics in the subsequent decades has long been a point of contention within scholarship on Celan. Some of the first reviews of Celan's poetry by West German critics, in the early 1950s, implicitly or explicitly aligned his work with French surrealism. However, this categorisation was invariably based on the assumption that surrealism, and by association Celan's poetry, was unconcerned with external reality. It thus followed that, when critical attention turned to the relevance of external reality (and in particular the Holocaust) in Celan's poetry, as it was later to do, the association with surrealism was largely discounted. By contrast, in this thesis I show that a renewed focus on the conjunction of Celan's oeuvre and surrealism establishes the ongoing importance of that movement within his poetics.

³ Paul Celan reputedly first became interested in the French surrealist movement during his time studying medicine in Tours (1938-39). See Alfred Kittner, 'Erinnerungen an den jungen Paul Celan', *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 32/iii (1982), 217-19 (p. 219); and Edith Silbermann, *Begegnung mit Paul Celan. Erinnerung und Interpretation* (Aachen: Rimbaud, 1995), p. 61.

Studies to date of the relationship between Celan's poetry and surrealism have tended to compare Celan's style and techniques to a generalised view of the surrealist project. However, since surrealist aesthetics were diverse and changed over time, such research can only inform its readers about similarities and differences between Celan's writing and one particular, often arbitrary, definition of surrealism. Although it is beyond doubt that Celan's poetry cannot be categorised as 'surrealist' according to any narrow definition of that aesthetic, for example as a celebration of automatic writing and surrender of the mind to unconscious forces, nonetheless it does not naturally follow that Celan's oeuvre is devoid of features that are also associated with surrealism. This present inquiry seeks out these features by examining Celan's relationship to surrealism solely on the basis of verifiable and concrete points of contact between his writings and surrealist works and theories. It therefore does not investigate the influence of what might be imagined as surrealism as a whole on Celan's writing, nor apparent surrealist methods and themes in Celan's poetry.¹ Rather, it analyses his encounters with specific and individual surrealist texts and concepts, and shows that certain elements of the surrealist project remained a significant presence within Celan's poetics, and that his ongoing engagement with surrealist texts contributed to his own poetic orientation.

The tendency within scholarship to date to disassociate Celan's oeuvre from surrealism has been fuelled by Celan's own comments on the subject, most explicitly in the aforementioned interview in *Die Welt*. In the course of this discussion, Celan seeks to resolve what he terms a 'Mißverständnis', stating: 'Ich werde ziemlich oft des Surrealismus bezichtigt – das ist natürlich Unsinn!'. However, it was precisely during the late 1950s, when this interview was conducted, that Celan began to engage once more with surrealist writers and concepts. In 1956 and late 1957 he translated poems by the French surrealist poets Paul Éluard and Robert Desnos; during the late 1950s and early

1960s his poetological notes and letters made reference to surrealism and to surrealist concerns; and during the 1960s he read and annotated volumes of poetry by Éluard and Desnos. Such evidence of Celan's continued interest in surrealist texts warrants a re-evaluation of the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism. This thesis conducts that inquiry by examining these instances of Celan's engagement with surrealist works and ideas.

Celan's engagement with surrealism includes his introduction to the publication of a series of lithographs by the German surrealist artist Edgar Jené in 1948, his translations of French surrealist poems (1945-57), unpublished drafts of those translations, and unpublished or recently published letters, poetological notes and prose fragments that relate either explicitly or implicitly to his reception of surrealism, from the late 1950s and early 1960s. I therefore examine the background to, and gradual development of, Celan's reception of surrealist texts, including presenting studies of the compositional processes of the translations and of his poetological writings. My close readings of the original surrealist poems that Celan translated allow for a more detailed and nuanced appreciation of particular features of surrealist aesthetics than any broad definition of surrealist poetry or theory permits. This study is consequently the first to conduct a focused examination of Celan's treatment of the surrealist elements of these poems, and so to observe how these elements are transformed when they are brought into contact with Celan's particular poetic approach. Other studies have examined these poems and their translations, but have categorised them as, *inter alia*, symbolist or avant-garde poems, and therefore have not considered specifically how Celan responds to them as surrealist poems.

In order to avoid arbitrary definitions of surrealism, this study investigates only Celan's engagement with texts by members of the French surrealist movement. It consequently does not take into account Celan's translations of poems by former surrealists. In this second, excluded category belong texts by René Char (1907-88), since the prose fragments and poetry by Char that Celan translated are founded largely in Char's experience of the French Resistance movement during the Second World War, and were written after he had severed all connections with Breton's surrealist group.⁴ For the same reason, Celan's version of Desnos's poem 'L'Építaphe' (1944) is addressed only briefly here, in Chapter 6; and his unpublished translation of Éluard's poem 'Les Armes de la douleur' (1944) is not taken into account, since both poems also arise in part from the French poets' experience of the Resistance and were composed after they had turned their backs on Breton's surrealist movement.⁵ An analysis of translations by Celan of a play and poems by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) also goes beyond the bounds of this thesis, because Picasso was never a member of Breton's surrealist group (IV, 8-73). The play, *Le Désir attrapé par la queue* (1941), was written while Picasso was living in occupied Paris, and the impression of a bleak, freezing, wartime winter pervades the drama. Immediately after completing his version of the play, Celan translated a series of poems that Picasso had written during the 1930s. The idea that these German versions are recontextualised by Celan in the light of *Le Désir attrapé par la queue*, so that they too evoke life in wartime

⁴ In their *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, André Breton and Éluard assert that Char separated from the surrealist movement in 1937. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 787-862 (p. 798). See also Serge Velay's account of the relationship between Breton's surrealist aesthetics and Char's poetics in his *René Char. L'éblouissement et la fureur* (Paris: Éditions Olbia, 1998), pp. 49-55. Celan's translations of Char's poems are printed in his *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, ed. by Beda Allemann and Stefan Reichert (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), IV, 424-595 (references to the *Gesammelte Werke* will hereafter be given in parentheses after each quotation, with the volume number in roman numerals followed by the page reference). An account of the background to and implications of Celan's versions of Char's texts is given in Ute Harbusch and Thomas Heck, 'Wie übersetzt man "Résistance"? René Char und Paul Eluard', in Axel Gellhaus (ed.), *Fremde Nähe. Celan als Übersetzer* (Marbach am Neckar: Marbacher Kataloge, 1997), pp. 200-22.

⁵ Celan's poem 'In Memoriam Paul Éluard' (1952; I, 130), written shortly after Éluard's death, also represents more a political than aesthetic response to the surrealist poet and so is not addressed here. See Evelyn Hünneke, 'Paul Celan – Paul Éluard. Entgegnung und Einvernehmen', *Arcadia*, 32/i (1997), 169-94 for a detailed interpretation of that poem.

France, is compelling yet separate from the principal focus of this thesis on Celan's engagement with texts by surrealist writers.

The first chapter of this thesis demonstrates the diversity of the surrealist project, showing that it cannot be understood solely as a commitment to automatic writing, nor as a programme that refuses to engage with material and political reality, as Celan scholarship so often maintains. On the contrary, a survey of texts by the principal theorists of surrealism, Breton, Éluard and Louis Aragon, from the 1920s to the 1940s, shows that during this period the surrealist project shifts from an attempt to generate irrational and arbitrary ideas and images to an increasing focus on reason and on engagement with past and present reality. The movement therefore gradually distances itself from the stringent rules that dominate in the early years of its existence, such as the expectation of automatic writing. A comparison of the surrealist groups in Bucharest and Vienna, two of the main centres of international surrealism during the 1930s and 1940s, with their counterparts in France at this time shows that certain key currents are common to both groups.

Since Celan was involved with the surrealist groups in Bucharest and Vienna in the late 1940s, this study of their aesthetics provides a valuable insight into his first-hand experience of surrealism, suggesting that this experience was more in line with the French surrealist aesthetics of the 1930s and 1940s than with that of the 1920s. Nevertheless, through a survey of criticism on Celan and surrealism in Chapter 2, I show that the conception of surrealism to which Celan's oeuvre tends to be compared by critics is invariably based on this early form of the movement, in which the unconscious mind takes absolute precedence over reason and reality. I show that this perception of surrealism is a commonplace within the West German literary establishment and within

scholarship on Celan and argue that it restricts a potentially fruitful consideration of the relationship between Celan's writing and surrealist texts.

The following chapters (3 to 7) explore this relationship, through analyses of Celan's encounters with surrealist texts: Celan's posthumously published versions of poems from Éluard's volume *Capitale de la douleur* (1945-47); his essay 'Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume' (1948); his translations published in an anthology entitled *Surrealistische Publikationen* (1950), with particular focus on his version of a poem by Aimé Césaire (1948-50); his version of a poem thought to be by Desnos, 'Le Dernier poème' (1957); and his rendering of Éluard's poem 'Nous avons fait la nuit' (1956-57).⁶ These encounters are all translations in the conventional sense (that is, inter-lingual transpositions) except for Celan's introduction to Jené's lithographs.⁷

Celan's text 'Edgar Jené' proves to be a form of translation in two other senses. Firstly, it arises from his attempt to articulate in words the experience of observing Jené's lithographs, and as such can be categorised as inter-semiotic transposition.⁸ Secondly, its concern with the communication between two different levels of perception, which may be understood to represent the conscious and unconscious mind, parallels the theories expressed by Breton in his treatise *Les Vases communicants* (1932).⁹ I show that this 'translation' of Breton's text informs an understanding of the relationship between Celan's poetics and surrealism. For 'Edgar Jené' also introduces the idea that language has been violated by the impact of real events (in particular the Holocaust), and Celan's

⁶ The dates in brackets refer to Celan's composition of the translations, as far as these can be ascertained from manuscripts and letters. On 'Le Dernier poème', see Chapter 6.

⁷ Celan, 'Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume', in Celan, *Edgar Jené. Der Traum vom Traume. Mit 30 Abbildungen und einer Vorbemerkung von Otto Basil* (Vienna: Agathon, 1948), pp. 7-12. I shall refer to this essay as 'Edgar Jené'.

⁸ This terminology is drawn from Roman Jakobson's essay 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' (1959), in *Selected Writings*, 8 vols (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), II, 260-66.

⁹ Breton, *Les Vases communicants*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, II, 101-215.

concern with this linguistic disturbance tends to lead scholars to distance his aesthetics from surrealism. However, I argue that in 'Edgar Jené' Celan combines the notion of linguistic violation with a surrealist approach akin to that exhibited by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*, thus demonstrating that the proposition that material reality intrudes into language can be combined with surrealist ideas such as the existence of a linguistic Unconscious. Consequently, 'Edgar Jené' establishes points of contact between Celan's poetics and surrealist aesthetics that are further examined in the subsequent chapters.

The close readings of Celan's translations of surrealist poems in Chapters 5 to 7 focus in particular on Celan's treatment of the surrealist characteristics of these French poems by Césaire, Desnos and Éluard. I show that these poems lend themselves to metapoetic transformation. The optimistic hope for regeneration through cataclysm, the blurring of boundaries between binary oppositions, and the assertion of permanent renewal in the original poems provide a fertile ground for the illustration and thematisation of some of Celan's key poetic theories. By reading these versions in the light of Celan's poetological writings in the late 1950s and early 1960s, my analyses show that Celan's poetic theories inform and are informed by these encounters with surrealist texts. Consequently, the versions expose the poetological import of the translation process and the relationship between this poetics of translation and Celan's broader poetics. By focusing in particular on the surrealist aspects of the original poems, and on Celan's transformation of these features into metapoetic figures, I demonstrate the poetological significance of Celan's encounter with surrealism.

Finally, Chapter 8 moves beyond the analysis of specific encounters with surrealist texts to a demonstration of how these analyses have opened up new insights into Celan's own poetry and poetological writings, and so shows that a better understanding of Celan's

relationship to surrealism has implications beyond the specific inquiry into his translations. These new readings of his poems and poetics are underpinned by an examination of the metaphor of communicating vessels, an image also favoured by Breton, in Celan's poetological writings and letters. Celan's treatment of that metaphor introduces a concept of shared poetic space that informs the interpretation of his well-known 'meridian' metaphor by aligning it with the notion of unconscious connections between texts and writers. This investigation therefore revises the commonly held view that Celan's poetics are unrelated to surrealism due to their apparent disavowal of the Unconscious. This idea that Celan discounted the Unconscious is in turn attributed within scholarship on Celan to the insistent memory of the Holocaust throughout his oeuvre. By contrast, my research shows that surrealist aesthetics are not essentially incompatible with such a concern with the past, and that Celan's use of concepts shared by and to some extent derived from the surrealists suggests the primacy of a linguistic Unconscious in his poetics.

This assertion of a linguistic Unconscious arises from Celan's engagement with the surrealist notion of ongoing communication between apparently opposing elements, which produces a sustained tension between two spheres. While in Breton's writings these spheres are considered to be conscious and unconscious reality, I show that Celan reformulates this tension to include the communication between the past and present, which in his view is inherent in linguistic expression. This linguistic Unconscious suggests that the meaning of a poetic text may be constituted in part by unintentional impulses. And on this account, the relationship between poetry and reality addressed by Celan in his interview with *Die Welt* does not indicate only a conscious engagement with reality. Rather, as is suggested by the phrase 'darin ist viel enthalten ...', the poetic text is situated in an unknown and permanently changing relationship to reality; and the poet's

intentions and his personal context form only one of a network of impulses that converge in the text at the moment of its reception. Through a focused examination of Celan's reception of surrealism, this study therefore draws conclusions that impact on an understanding not only on the specific status of that discourse in Celan's aesthetics, but also of the shifting relationship between poetic language and the poet's and readers' realities; and of the intentional and unintentional cultural encounters that impact on linguistic and literary signification.

Chapter 1

Surrealism

André Breton, the founder of the surrealist movement, first defined surrealism in 1924 in his 'Premier manifeste du surréalisme':

SURRÉALISME, n. m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.¹

However, Breton continued to modify his definition throughout the ensuing decades, and an appreciation of the resulting diversity of the surrealist movement is essential background to a consideration of the relationship between Paul Celan's oeuvre and the surrealist aesthetic.² Indeed, an understanding of that diversity highlights part of the difficulty of evaluating the surrealist qualities of Celan's oeuvre. This chapter demonstrates the development of the surrealist aesthetic, from the so-called intuitive phase, in which the powers of the Unconscious were privileged, to what is known as the reasoning phase, when reason and material reality came to the fore. Breton himself defined these two phases in a speech to the Belgian surrealists, entitled 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?' (1934).³

¹ André Breton, 'Manifeste du surréalisme' (1924), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Marguerite Bonnet, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), I, 309-46 (p. 328).

² I shall use the lower case 's' for the terms 'surrealism' and 'surrealist' throughout. The fact that Breton and the other members of the surrealist group, as well as most French scholars of the movement, always use the lower case 's' appropriately reflects the flexibility of the aesthetic.

³ Breton, 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?' (1934), in *Œuvres complètes*, II, pp. 223-62.

The particular elements of the surrealist movement that are significant for Celan's engagement with that aesthetic are highlighted in the following discussion: namely, the dialectical nature of the aesthetic, the notion of permanent renewal, and the idea of the inherent connection between dream and waking reality. Subsequently, an appreciation of the diversity of the surrealist movement is established through a survey of the surrealist groups in Bucharest and Vienna. These groups are of particular interest in view of Celan's encounter with surrealism, since the poet came into close contact with both of them.

1 The intuitive phase

Surrealism developed in part out of Dada, an anti-rationalist literary and artistic movement launched in Zurich during the First World War, whose most prominent member was the Romanian poet and essayist Tristan Tzara.⁴ Dada was founded on the notion of absolute protest, principally against those conventions that were thought to have allowed Europe to drift into war in 1914. Breton's retrospective description of Dada, in 1934, aptly summarises it as an anarchic and destructive approach to the *status quo*, based on a refusal to make judgements.⁵ Indeed, Dadaists sought to reveal the absurdity of all conventional modes of thought and expression, yet did not seek to replace these devalued forms of representation with anything new. Rather, they aimed to facilitate absolute artistic liberty by destroying all restrictive conventions. This approach involved the creation of unconventional art forms, which included collages, dance

⁴ There is no single date for the founding of Dada, since it was a fluid and diverse enterprise that resisted definition as a movement. However, regular meetings and performances by Dada artists began in early 1916, and in July 1917 the journal *Dada* was first published. Artists associated with Dada include Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, George Grosz, Francis Picabia and Kurt Schwitters. For more detailed information on, and examples of, Dada art, see Robert Motherwell (ed.), *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1951); Marc Dachy, *The Dada Movement, 1915-1923* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); and the catalogue of a retrospective exhibition of Dada in 2005: Leah Dickermann (ed.), *Dada: Zürich, Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005).

⁵ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 236.

performances and artworks using everyday objects (so-called ready-mades, such as Marcel Duchamp's famous urinal, entitled 'Fontaine' (1917)). Tzara corresponded with several French writers, including Breton, and on moving to Paris in 1919 he engaged in literary activities with Breton, Paul Éluard and Philippe Soupault. These writers collaborated on a number of texts that were then published in the journal *Littérature* (1919-24), to which the future founders of the surrealist movement were regular contributors.

As the vigour of Dada faded, owing partly to a rift between Breton and Tzara in 1922, the movement that would be known as surrealism began to develop. Alongside Breton, the founding members of surrealism included the poets Louis Aragon, Éluard, Benjamin Péret and Soupault. Like Dada, this movement aimed for the destruction of conventional modes of perception and representation. However, the surrealists rejected Dada's nihilism, seeking instead to replace these devalued conventions with new forms of perception and representation.

Breton later dated the beginning of the surrealist movement to 1919, although in formal terms it was founded in 1924 with the publication of his 'Manifeste du surréalisme'. The first issue of the journal *La Révolution surréaliste* was also published towards the end of the same year.⁶ This retrospective re-definition of the parameters of the surrealist movement is typical of Breton's writings on surrealism, and in particular of his speech 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?'. During the second half of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s Breton repeatedly defined and re-defined the limits and aims of the surrealist movement, which

⁶ In 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?', Breton dates the beginnings of surrealism to the publication of the first automatic text, *Les champs magnétiques* (1919), written by Breton and Soupault. See Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 231. The first recorded use of the term 'surréaliste' in France was by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, in 1917, who described his play *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (1917) as a surrealist drama. See Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 11.

is one of the reasons why it is impossible to speak of a consistent, monolithic surrealist aesthetic. Breton's re-definition of the movement in 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?', in particular, constitutes a detailed re-evaluation of the aims and results of the movement. This re-definition therefore reveals the extent to which Breton's theoretical approach to the relationship between the imagination and reality had evolved. Focusing in his first manifesto on the unconscious mind, by the early 1930s Breton's attention had shifted to a privileging of material reality. This gradual change is examined in the following analysis of key theoretical texts, beginning with his 'Manifeste du surréalisme'.

The development of surrealist theory was greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Freud's exploration of the unconscious mind appealed to Breton and the other founders of the surrealist movement in their search for a theoretical basis on which to develop a constructive aesthetics and philosophy. In other words, Freud's investigations provided the early surrealists with the tools to replace the nihilistic protest of Dada with productive and creative methods. Yet unlike Freud, who examined unconscious drives in order to remedy flaws in the conscious mind, thus permitting the individual to lead a healthy life in tune with prevailing social conditions, the surrealists celebrated the irrational nature of the Unconscious, and rejected the *status quo*. The potential for access to this hidden layer of the mind seemed to suggest the possibility of overcoming the conventions that the surrealists perceived as stifling. Thus, in contrast to the Freudian intention of preventing unconscious drives from interfering with the patient's conscious life, the surrealists sought to overcome the conscious mind, which they perceived as inauthentic, by way of these unconscious processes. Breton expressed this perceived conflict between the unconscious and conscious mind in his first manifesto:

L'imagination est peut-être sur le point de reprendre ses droits. Si les profondeurs de notre esprit recèlent d'étranges forces capables d'augmenter celles de la surface, ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles, il y a tout intérêt à les capter.⁷

By thus privileging unconscious processes over the workings of the conscious mind, the surrealists hoped to liberate the subject from the utilitarian forces of logic, reason and communicability, which they believed limited its capacity to perceive reality. It was only by surrendering the mind to the forces of the Unconscious that the full breadth of reality, rather than the conventional and stereotypical view of that reality, could be perceived.

The states of infancy, insanity and dream, viewed by Freud as examples of the partial surrender of the conscious mind to unconscious drives, were celebrated by the surrealists during the 1920s. The surrealist poets attempted to attain similar levels of access to the Unconscious by artificial means such as automatic writing, games, collage and dream reports.⁸ All of these activities constituted attempts to write without any pre-formed intention, or any aim of communicating a particular message. Automatic writing was usually performed when the poets were in a supposedly hypnotic trance, and this early period of surrealism has therefore often been referred to both by surrealists and scholars of surrealism as the 'époque des sommeils'.⁹ An example of the surrealist collage can be found in Breton's 'Manifeste du surréalisme', in which he presents a random sequence of newspaper headlines as a poem. Surrealist writers also tended to record their dreams, creating *récits de rêves* such as those published by Robert Desnos in 1922.¹⁰ This practice reflects the difference between the surrealists' and Freud's approaches to the

⁷ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 316.

⁸ Breton discusses the use of games in a footnote to his 'Second manifeste', in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 821-22.

⁹ The surrealist poet Robert Desnos was reputedly particularly adept at entering into these hypnotic trances, according to Marie-Claire Dumas. See 'Rêves. Sommeils hypnotiques' in Desnos, *Œuvres*, ed. by Dumas (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), pp. 122-41.

¹⁰ Desnos, *Œuvres*, pp. 125-28. See also Sarane Alexandrian's chapter on Desnos's dream narratives in his *Le Surréalisme et le rêve* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), pp. 262-83.

Unconscious. While, for Freud, dream narratives were a mode of seeking out and healing fissures in the patient's Unconscious, the surrealists celebrated them as boundless sources of creativity.

In his 'Manifeste du surréalisme', Breton takes issue not with reality itself, but with the modes of expression available to perceive and express that reality. His argument is based on the assumption that reality is too complex and multi-faceted to be expressed adequately using the conventional language available. Thus, rather than subordinating reality to the word, he argues that the word should be opened up to encompass all the possibilities of reality. He thereby emphasises the image rather than the word, since the former is considered to be capable of reflecting the complex nature of reality in a way that verbal expression cannot. Breton attempts to release the potential for new perception and expression by championing the random juxtaposition of images that do not rationally belong together. He maintains that chance and spontaneity are key to the success of these pairings, and he quotes examples from the writings of fellow poet Pierre Reverdy, such as: 'Dans le ruisseau il y a une chanson qui coule'.¹¹ Breton uses electrical imagery to explain the effect of these juxtapositions. He states that a spark is created by the clash of images, igniting a 'lumière de l'image', and that the greater the difference of potential between the two elements, the brighter the spark. He describes the result as: 'la plus belle des nuits, *la nuit des éclairs*: le jour, auprès d'elle, est la nuit.'¹² Accordingly, surrealist poetry, of the 1920s and early 1930s in particular, abounds with images of night, light, sparks and stars. These images may be associated with the emphasis in surrealist

¹¹ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 337. This celebration of unconventional juxtapositions is one of the reasons for the surrealists' identification of the Comte de Lautréamont (pseudonym of the French writer Isidore Ducasse, 1846-70) as one of the precursors of their movement. Lautréamont's best-known publication is *Les chants de Maldoror* (1869), and the surrealists celebrated in particular his incongruous juxtapositions of images, such as: 'Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie.' Cf. Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Marcelle Dumas and Lucien Scheler, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), I, 971.

¹² Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 338 (Breton's emphasis).

theory on dream (and therefore on the night); on the plumbing of the depths of reality; and on the spark of new creativity, as elaborated in Breton's thought.

The focus on the image of light can also be aligned with the surrealist emphasis on new vision, for the aim of surrealism was not to create a new reality, but to cast a new light on the external world by perceiving those elements inaccessible to the eye that is ruled by reason and convention. Aragon succinctly expresses the capacity of the surrealist image to precipitate a new understanding of reality in his novel *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926): 'Chaque image à chaque coup vous force à réviser tout l'Univers.'¹³ This statement suggests that the subject's conception of the universe must change with the reception of each new image. Such an idea of permanent renewal is central to the surrealist aesthetic, in particular that propagated by Éluard. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, one of the key elements of Éluard's poetics is the recognition of similarities between objects otherwise considered to be alien to one another. The identification of unexpected resemblances between images suggests that one image may represent a multitude of other images, and means that relations between images are in constant flux. As such, the notion of permanent renewal evident in Aragon's quotation is also central to Éluard's aesthetics.¹⁴ Moreover, the concept of permanent renewal highlights the significance of the future in the surrealist aesthetic, since the unique nature of the surrealist image posits the possibility of endless new configurations. Such a focus on novelty and the orientation towards the future is not an attempt to change reality, but to broaden and deepen one's

¹³ Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris*, cited in Wolfgang Babilas, *Études sur Louis Aragon* (Münster: Nodus, 2002), p. 72.

¹⁴ This concept of permanent renewal is expressed by Breton's phrase 'Toujours pour la première fois', both the first and last line of the final poem in his volume *L'Air de l'eau* (1934). Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 407-08. See Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 144, for a discussion of the concept of renewal in Breton's and Éluard's poetics.

perception of existing reality, in order to establish a more authentic relationship between the speaker and the external world.

2 The reasoning phase

Breton's first manifesto focuses on the perception of reality, but as he himself later noted, the term 'surrealism' itself suggests an attempt at transcendence, at an escape from existing reality.¹⁵ Indeed, Breton's early writings often seem to privilege the Unconscious and reject reality, such as when he refers to the waking state as a mere interference in comparison to dream: 'Je prends, encore une fois, l'état de veille. Je suis obligé de le tenir pour un phénomène d'interférence.'¹⁶ Yet in Breton's theoretical texts of the late 1920s and 1930s, material reality comes increasingly to the fore, until it eventually parallels the significance of the Unconscious. This focus on the material conditions of social reality may be attributed to the intensification of Breton's Marxist convictions, in particular from 1927 onwards, when he joined the French Communist Party. Indeed, the increasing commitment to Communism is indicated by the titles of the French surrealist journals. The first journal was entitled 'La Révolution surréaliste' (1924-29), whereby the term 'Révolution' evokes, *inter alia*, Communist revolution, but simultaneously posits a specifically surrealist vision of revolt. By contrast, from 1929 until 1933 (when Breton was ejected from the French Communist Party), the surrealist group published a journal entitled 'Le surréalisme au service de la Révolution', suggesting that surrealism had been subsumed into that political revolution. The following examination of Breton's theoretical texts after 1927 reveals this new emphasis on material reality and social revolution.

¹⁵ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 230-31.

¹⁶ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 318.

In his 'Second manifeste du surréalisme' (1930), Breton insists that surrealists must not isolate themselves, but act as if they are 'au monde', which includes considering 'la question du régime social sous lequel nous vivons'.¹⁷ He claims that surrealism is currently in its preparatory state, which consists of artistic tasks, but that ultimately revolutionary ideas and acts will come to the fore.¹⁸ By the time of his speech to the Belgian surrealists in 1934 ('Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?'), Breton had come to regard surrealism as an act of social revolution. In this speech, in which he retrospectively summarises and evaluates the development of the surrealist movement, Breton repeatedly returns to the assertion that surrealism's primary concern is material and social reality. He states that his former belief in the omnipotence of thought was mistaken, and argues instead for the supremacy of matter over mind.¹⁹ Thus Breton no longer posits dream as a substitute for reality, but focuses his attention on reality and its failings. He suggests that the surrealist movement was founded on the absolute renunciation of all the intellectual, moral and social obligations that burden the individual, which he specifies as follows: 'Intellectuellement c'était le rationalisme vulgaire [...], moralement c'étaient tous les devoirs: familial, religieux, civique; socialement, c'était le travail.'²⁰ Moreover, the primacy of freedom, evident in Breton's first manifesto, is reiterated, but this time the liberation of the individual from material and social constraint is paramount. Breton argues that freedom of expression is only possible once human beings have been emancipated (in a Marxist sense), and that such a liberation is therefore the primary aim of surrealism.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 791-93.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 820. This evolutionary conception of surrealism parallels the Marxist idea that Communism can only be achieved through a series of preparatory stages.

¹⁹ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 231-33.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 226-27.

²¹ Ibid., p. 230.

One of the key documents marking Breton's new orientation towards reality is his book entitled *Les Vases communicants* (1932).²² Despite the fact that a large portion of this text consists of Breton's detailed descriptions of some of his dreams, these dream reports are not published on their own as isolated texts, as such writings were during the 1920s. Rather, Breton seeks to compare the dream narrative to details of his waking life, and so to establish how the dream may have been generated by certain aspects of his recent lived experience. The title, which translates as 'Communicating Vessels', illustrates this relationship between the two realms of dream and reality, by referring to the image of two vessels that are joined at their bases.²³ When liquid is poured into one of them, it fills each vessel up to the same level. Thus, the vessels 'communicate', in that the volume of water is shared and may pass between them.²⁴ In Breton's text, the two vessels represent everyday life and the Unconscious respectively, and the water appears to symbolise dream, since Breton refers to it as the conducting wire ('fil conducteur') and capillary tissue between the realms of sleep and waking. Breton argues that all unconscious activity is rooted in, and can therefore be traced back to, lived reality, and that consequently the two realms cannot be separated. Thus the privileging of the Unconscious that defines Breton's original conception of surrealism is replaced by a recognition that both the unconscious and the conscious mind, dream and reality, are of equal significance.

The restricted importance of the Unconscious in Breton's later aesthetics is confirmed in Breton's theoretical text, *Position politique du surréalisme* (1935). Here, Breton seems to deny

²² Ibid., p. 101-215.

²³ Breton, 'Communicating Vessels', trans. by Caws and Geoffrey T. Harris (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

²⁴ The scientific experiment that has come to be known as the 'communicating vessels' was first noted by the Italian scientist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). See the editor's notes on *Les Vases communicants* in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 1350. Breton had previously associated this idea that thought must not be separated from life with the image of communicating vessels, at the end of his essay *Le surréalisme et la peinture* (1928).

that the surrealist interest in the Unconscious was ever anything but a mode of attaining a more authentic relationship with reality:

L'automatisme psychique – est-il bien indispensable d'y revenir? – n'a jamais constitué pour le surréalisme une fin en soi et prétendre le contraire est faire acte de mauvaise foi.²⁵

This suggestion that an automatic approach is a means of revitalising perception and thereby plumbing the depths of reality, rather than an end in itself, is paralleled by Éluard's qualification of the significance of dream narratives. In 1937 he wrote that 'on ne prend pas le récit de rêve pour un poème', indicating that the dream content may be viewed as the source of, and impetus for, the creation of a poem, but does not constitute the poem itself.²⁶ This statement thus recalls Breton's treatment of his own dream narratives in *Les Vases communicants*, in that he suggests that the dream must not be received unreflectively, but rather considered for what it can disclose about the dreaming subject's lived reality.²⁷

These examples of surrealist theories that appear to have diverged from the founding concepts of the movement are typical of surrealist texts published during and after the 1930s, and indicate that any attempt to summarise surrealism solely according to Breton's original definition of 'automatisme psychique pur' is misleading.²⁸ Such a definition overlooks the fact that the surrealist aesthetic developed and changed over time. Moreover, the studies of the aesthetics of individual surrealist poets in the ensuing

²⁵ Breton, *Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui* (1935), in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 437-38. In *Grains et issues* (1935), Tzara had referred to investigative methods becoming an end in themselves. It is probable that Breton is here referring to this text. See Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 1585.

²⁶ Éluard, *Premières vues anciennes* (1937), in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 550.

²⁷ The extent to which *Les Vases communicants* can be considered to engage with Freudian dream theories is explored in detail in Chapter 4.

²⁸ Cf. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 232.

chapters reveal that each poet had a distinct voice that may not be subsumed under Breton's dogmatic definitions.

Renate Böschenstein-Schäfer provides useful evidence for the breadth of the surrealist project in her analysis of surrealist elements in twentieth-century German literature. Her characterisation of the surrealist aesthetic moves beyond the confines of Breton's manifestos, to include works from the *fin de siècle*. She thus redefines the terms of surrealism for the German literary realm, stating that German surrealist poetry relegated the Unconscious, automatic writing and fantasy to a secondary status, privileging instead linguistic revolution, in its attempt to liberate language from the servitude of traditional modes of expression.²⁹ Böschenstein-Schäfer's analysis is striking, as her account of German surrealism mirrors that of French surrealism during the 1930s and 1940s. Therefore, rather than suggesting that German surrealism diverges from the French movement, Böschenstein-Schäfer's research indicates that the two movements developed in parallel. Böschenstein-Schäfer also makes the important observation that a text can have surrealist elements without fully subscribing to Breton's surrealist aesthetic. I contend that this more flexible definition of the term 'surrealist' can also be applied to the French surrealist movement, as demonstrated by the various aesthetic and political positions held by members of the French surrealist group.

Within this range of theoretical positions, the element of Breton's aesthetics that remained relatively consistent throughout the 1920s and 1930s is the emphasis on freedom, expressed as the hope for liberation either from the strictures of rational thought or from the constraints of capitalism. And it was this feature in particular of the

²⁹ Renate Böschenstein-Schäfer, 'Eléments surréalistes dans la littérature allemande du XXe Siècle', *Études Littéraires*, 3/iii (1970), 283-301 (p. 293).

pre-war aesthetic that was emphasised and developed by adherents of the surrealist movement in Bucharest and Vienna after the Second World War. Since Celan came into close contact with these two groups, I shall now turn to an examination of their aesthetics, and in particular to their relationship to Breton's own post-war aesthetics.

3 Post-War Romanian and French surrealism

In his volume *Le Surréalisme et le rêve* (1974), which provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of international surrealism, the art historian Sarane Alexandrian argues that the Romanian surrealists developed extreme experimental and theoretical positions as a result of their enforced isolation from their French counterparts during the Second World War.³⁰ Barbara Wiedemann draws similar conclusions from her comparison of post-war Romanian surrealism with French surrealism, illustrating the latter principally through reference to Breton's (pre-war) manifestos.³¹ Wiedemann identifies two distinct groups of surrealist writers in Bucharest after 1945: one led by Ghérasim Luca and Dolfi Trost, and the other by Gellu Naum, Paul Paun and Virgil Teodorescu.³² The principal features common to both these Romanian groups may be categorised as an emphasis on the notion of freedom, a reappraisal of the role of the Unconscious, the prevalence of Communist ideology and the impact of the wartime destruction. The following comparison of these aspects with French surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s suggests that the Romanian surrealist writers did not diverge from French surrealism, as Alexandrian and Wiedemann argue, but rather that both surrealist movements developed along similar lines.

³⁰ Alexandrian, p. 222.

³¹ Barbara Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan. Studien zum Frühwerk* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), pp. 113-18.

³² Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 112.

Wiedemann argues that the ideal of freedom was at the foundation of Romanian surrealist aesthetics, as expressed for example in Naum, Paun and Teodorescu's manifesto *Critica mizeriei* (1945), in which they state that all surrealists are united by 'das andauernde Bemühen um eine Befreiung aller Formen des menschlichen Ausdrucks, eine Befreiung, die ohne eine totale Befreiung des Menschen nicht gedacht werden kann'.³³ This statement expresses the same idea as in Breton's speech 'Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?', in which he states that: 'aujourd'hui plus que jamais la *libération de l'esprit*, fin expresse du surréalisme, aux yeux des surréalistes exige pour première condition la *libération de l'homme*'.³⁴ Breton's theories continue to be defined by this fundamental desire for freedom, becoming more persistent during and after the war. During the 1940s the threat of Stalinism, which is at the basis of Breton's disillusionment with Soviet Communism, becomes particularly evident in Breton's theoretical texts. For example, his essay *La Lampe dans l'horloge* (1948) constitutes a rejection of the oppression inherent in the Soviet regime.³⁵ Thus the fundamental importance of freedom in Breton's world-view becomes apparent.³⁶

In their post-war theoretical texts, the position taken by the Romanian surrealists on the subject of the Unconscious was far more circumspect than that in Breton's first manifesto. Luca and Trost, in particular, criticised the indiscriminate use of surrealist techniques, such as automatic writing, and instead advocated exploration into new methods. They maintained a fiercely critical attitude towards the Unconscious, asserting that not all dreams are to be accepted unquestioningly and unreflectively. Such a sceptical approach to the Unconscious parallels Breton's re-evaluation of automatic writing during

³³ Translated from the original Romanian by Wiedemann, in *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 113.

³⁴ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 230 (Breton's emphasis).

³⁵ Breton, *La Lampe dans l'horloge* (1948), in *Œuvres complètes*, III, 769-85.

³⁶ At the end of *Arcane 17*, Breton argues that a state of permanent freedom should be the ultimate aim of civilisation. Breton, *Arcane 17*, in *Œuvres complètes*, III, 37-95 (pp. 92-93).

the 1930s, and his replacement of that exercise with a reflective approach to the interpretation of dreams (in particular in *Les Vases communicants*). Similarly, Éluard's qualification of the status of dream narratives in 1937 ('on ne prend pas le récit de rêve pour un poème') suggests that the conscious mind should be involved in the interpretation of dreams.

The idea that one's approach to the Unconscious should remain critical (and therefore, necessarily, partially conscious) was highlighted by Luca and Trost in their explicit rejection of certain manifestations of the Unconscious, such as dreams that reflect bourgeois aspirations.³⁷ This renunciation of any traces of bourgeois influence reflects the Communist ideology that determined the theoretical writings of all the Romanian surrealists after the war. Both groups of Romanian surrealists sought to render surrealism a programme of action rather than merely of aesthetics.³⁸ Similarly, from the late 1920s onwards Breton redefined the surrealist aim as revolutionary action. The Communist underpinnings of Breton's conception of surrealism during this period can be summarised in his assertion of a connection between the surrealist aim for liberation and proletarian revolution: 'cette libération de l'homme, nous ne pouvons l'attendre que de la Révolution prolétarienne'.³⁹ Yet Breton insists that this commitment to material reality must remain in parallel with a focus on the mind, so that, like the Romanian surrealists, he criticises both those former members of his surrealist group who limit surrealism to a purely artistic and literary exercise, as well as those who attempt to make it wholly practical and political.⁴⁰

³⁷ Alexandrian, p. 224.

³⁸ Cf. Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 112.

³⁹ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 246.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

George Guțu is Professor of German at Bucharest University and one of the first scholars to conduct research into connections between Celan and contemporary Romanian poets. Both he and Wiedemann link the primacy of images of destruction in the poetry of the Romanian surrealists to the poets' recent experience of the Second World War.⁴¹ Wiedemann compares these images of destruction to the basic principles of pre-war French surrealism, by aligning the representation of chaos with the desire to destroy conventional categories: 'Chaos also auch als Befreiung'.⁴² However, this aesthetic chaos is not the only point of contact between the Romanian surrealists' images of destruction and French surrealism. For the destructive reality of the Second World War is also reflected in contemporary French surrealist texts. An awareness of the disaster of the Second World War suffuses Breton's texts during the 1940s, increasing his engagement with reality as well as his desire to transform the existing conditions. Such destruction is rarely attributed explicitly to the war, but is expressed through an increased impression of disorientation and aggression within his images and linguistic structures.

Although Breton's choice of exile over participation in the Resistance movement during the Second World War led to the widespread impression in Parisian literary circles that he refused to engage with the reality of the war and its aftermath, Breton's writings suggest otherwise. For example, his essay 'Devant le rideau' (1947) apparently disavows memory, replacing it with a focus on future inspiration; yet it simultaneously attacks the former Belgian surrealists for employing solely positive images in their works ('charme, plaisir, soleil'), to the exclusion of negative impulses more appropriate to the state of the world: 'tristesse, ennui, objets menaçants'.⁴³ So although Breton rarely wrote explicitly political poems or texts in which the war is represented directly, an awareness of the

⁴¹ Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 119; George Guțu, *Die Lyrik Paul Celans und der geistige Raum Rumäniens* (Bucharest: University of Bucharest, 1990), p. 98.

⁴² Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 120.

⁴³ Breton, 'Devant le rideau', in *Œuvres complètes*, III, 740-49 (p. 744).

destruction and lack of freedom inherent in contemporary reality is inscribed into his oppressive images that reflect disorientation and loss. One of the most extreme example of such writing that clearly reflects external reality is his poem 'Guerre' (1944), which Celan translated and which is discussed in Chapter 5.⁴⁴

The association of destruction with renewal is particularly evident in Breton's post-war novel *Arcane 17* (1944-47), named after a tarot card and making reference to a range of occult ideas. Breton uses the central image of a huge rocky outcrop in Quebec (where he wrote this text) to discuss his view of the paradoxical state of the world. The gradual erosion of the rock symbolises the destructive influence of war, yet at the same time the rock's solidity and unity represents for him the fundamental unity of humankind, and therefore gives him hope for the future. This hope also arises from Breton's perception of the rock as the embodiment of layers of historical time. The geological strata reveal the development of historical eras and suggest a benevolent continuity. Breton's celebration of permanent renewal is therefore based on the notion that the present and future are composed in part by the past, and that the recognition of links between these realms can enrich one's understanding of the present. Thus in the post-war years both the Romanian and French surrealists portray destruction as being necessary in order to permit a renewal of reality.

This idea that destruction must precede synthesis and renewal is based on a dialectical conception that is central to the Romanian surrealist project. Luca and Trost's manifesto is entitled 'Dialectique de la dialectique' (1945), and Wiedemann also highlights the widespread use of oxymoron and paradox in Romanian surrealist poetry as an example

⁴⁴ Breton, 'Guerre', in *Œuvres complètes*, III, 22-23.

of this dialectical mode.⁴⁵ From the 1920s onwards, Breton also draws substantially on dialectical models in order to develop his surrealist theory, taking his lead in particular from Hegelian and Marxist philosophies.⁴⁶ In his second manifesto, he claims that Arthur Rimbaud's ideal of verbal alchemy should be taken literally, so suggesting that the surrealist poem should seek to fuse two disparate elements in order to produce a third, completely new element.⁴⁷

Wiedemann notes that the Romanian surrealist idea of dialectical synthesis suggests a utopian hope for a better future reality, which gives Romanian surrealism its orientation towards the future, its aim for a 'noch zu schaffende Wirklichkeit'.⁴⁸ Such a focus on the future is also evident in Breton's reference to Rimbaud in his second manifesto, in which he aligns the surrealist method with the thoughts expressed in one of Rimbaud's letters. This letter, to Georges Izambard on 13 May 1871, has become known as the first 'lettre du voyant', since Rimbaud affirms in it a link between the poet and the seer.⁴⁹ By quoting from this letter in his own manifesto, Breton underlines the visionary, future-oriented nature of his own poetics.

It is undeniable that the Romanian surrealists were isolated during the Second World War, and that their direct experience of the war was very different from that of the French surrealists, since they suffered the Nazi occupation and the rule of a fascist regime, while many of the French surrealists went into exile. However, the key features of post-war Romanian surrealist aesthetics, namely the privileging of freedom, a reflective

⁴⁵ Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, pp. 116-17.

⁴⁶ The central importance of Hegel to the movement, principally because of his invention of 'la machine dialectique', is expressed in Breton's speech 'Situation surréaliste de l'objet' (1935), in his *Œuvres complètes*, II, 472-96 (p. 476).

⁴⁷ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 818. The phrase 'l'alchimie du verbe' is one of the chapter titles in Rimbaud's text *Une saison en enfer* (1873).

⁴⁸ Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, p. 117.

⁴⁹ Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), pp.248-49.

approach to the Unconscious, a Communist ideology, a dialectical approach, and the concomitant orientation towards the future accompanied by an awareness of the destruction inherent in the past and present, are shared with French surrealism of the 1930s and 40s. These similarities between French and Romanian surrealist theory suggest that the two groups developed in the same direction despite their separation during the war years.

4 Surrealist reception and production in post-war Vienna

In his study of the reception of French surrealism in post-war Austria, Johannes von Schlebrügge argues that the cultural climate of post-war Vienna was not conducive to the avant-garde. He attributes the resistance to such artistic movements as surrealism in part to the loss of national security during the war, which was then replaced with a focus on idealised versions of the pre-war period.⁵⁰ This idealistic attachment to the past is exemplified in a letter from the Austrian writer Alexander Lernet-Holenia to the cultural journal *Der Turm* (1945):

In der Tat brauchen wir nur dort fortzusetzen, wo uns die Träume eines Irren unterbrochen haben, in der Tat brauchen wir nicht voraus-, sondern nur zurückblicken. Um es vollkommen klar zu sagen: wir haben es nicht nötig, mit der Zukunft zu kokettieren und nebulöse Projekte zu machen, wir sind, im besten und wertvollsten Verstande, unsere Vergangenheit, wir haben uns nur zu besinnen, da wir unsere Vergangenheit sind – und sie wird unsere Zukunft werden.⁵¹

Schlebrügge also attributes the resistance to surrealism in post-war Austria to the aura of mysticism and irrationalism surrounding the movement, which may have suggested a connection to the perceived mystical and irrational nature of Nazism. Indeed, Lernet-

⁵⁰ Johannes von Schlebrügge, *Geschichtssprünge* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1985), p. 8.

⁵¹ Alexander Lernet-Holenia, 'Gruß des Dichters', *Der Turm*, I/iv/v (1945), 109. *Der Turm* was published monthly by the *Österreichische Kulturvereinigung* in Vienna from 1945 onwards.

Holenia's description of the Nazi annexation of Austria as resulting from the 'Träume eines Irren' reflects this focus on the irrational character of the Nazi regime. Schlebrügge argues further that the ambivalent reception of surrealism in post-war Vienna was due to the fact that it could be viewed in one of two ways: either as a violent aesthetic that somehow contributed to the outbreak of war; or as the artistic programme that overcame the ethical and spiritual debasement of the war.

The first of these views, which considered surrealism to represent an aesthetic of chaos that undermined ethical values, even led to the accusation that surrealism was the very cause of the catastrophe. As an example of this conservative attitude, Schlebrügge quotes a passage from the Austrian art historian's Hans Sedlmayer's *Verlust der Mitte. Die bildende Kunst als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (1948), in which he argues that surrealism, with its leitmotif of absolute chaos, was the spiritual precursor to the war and as such partially to blame for the disaster.⁵² Schlebrügge considers the second of these views, the idea that surrealism helped to overcome the spiritual debasement brought about by the war, to have resulted from a wholly different understanding of the relationship between war and art. On this account, aesthetics were not considered to be the potential cause of war, and instead art's response to the war was investigated. As such, surrealism was viewed in some quarters as the artistic programme which embodied and thereby overcame the war, by preserving the experience of destruction and chaos in its aesthetic structures.

Nevertheless, those in post-war Vienna who sought to engage with the recent past were few and had to struggle to make their voices heard. One of the principal figures in this movement was the author Otto Basil, who published the literary journal *Plan*.⁵³ This

⁵² Schlebrügge, p. 15.

⁵³ *Plan* was edited by Otto Basil (1901-83) and Max Hölzer (1915-84). Basil was an author, journalist and translator. Hölzer was a judge in Graz from 1950-52, and developed an interest in French

journal had first appeared in 1938 and was conceived as an anti-Nazi journal committed to promoting the European avant-garde. For example, the third issue (1938) was devoted entirely to surrealism.⁵⁴ When Basil re-established the journal in 1945, he and his co-editor Max Hölzer remained committed to promoting avant-garde literature, but added to their programme an examination of the causes and effects of the war.⁵⁵ The commitment to surrealism shown by *Plan* is evident both in its wide-ranging discussions of the movement, as well as in special issues such as *Sonderheft Junges Frankreich* (*Plan* II/xi (1947)), and the planned surrealism issue of 1948, which however did not appear due to financial constraints.

A second defining influence on this new interest in surrealism in post-war Austria was the artist Edgar Jené. Jené was a surrealist artist, born in Saarbrücken in 1904, who emigrated from Germany to Vienna in 1935 after his work had been denounced by the National Socialists as 'entartete Kunst'. When he was called up for military service in 1940, he worked as an interpreter in a Prisoner of War camp in Krems, Lower Austria. After the war he returned to Vienna, where he became one of the principal members of the surrealist movement, picture editor of *Plan* and co-organiser of the first surrealist exhibition in Vienna in early 1948. A committed surrealist, acquainted with Breton, Jené contributed significantly to the atmosphere of surrealist endeavour within artistic circles in Vienna.⁵⁶

surrealism through his friendship with the Graz artists Kurt Weber and Ferdinand Bilger. See Ruth V. Gross, 'The Poetics of Opposition: *Plan*, 1938', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 12/ii (1979), 23-40.

⁵⁴ This special edition was announced on the first page of the first issue of *Plan* in 1938, revealing how fundamental the surrealist movement was to Basil's project. However, after the Nazi annexation of Austria in March 1938 the following two issues of *Plan* were confiscated and destroyed by the Austrian *Pressepolizei*, and further publication was prohibited. Gross, p. 40.

⁵⁵ See Basil and Hölzer's manifesto in the first post-war issue of their journal: *Plan*, I/i (1945), 1.

⁵⁶ See Georg-W. Koltzsch, *Schön ist nur das Wunderbare: Leben, Werke, Begegnungen des Malers Edgar Jené* (Saarbrücken: Die Mitte, 1984); Sabine Könniker, 'Sichtbares, Hörbares': *Die Beziehung zwischen Sprachkunst und bildender Kunst am Beispiel Paul Celans* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1995), pp. 84-88; and Monika Bogs, "'An Eskimo in Darkest Africa": Edgar Jené und der Wiener Surrealismus', in *Displaced*, pp. 71-79.

Despite these overt signs of commitment to the surrealist movement, the extent to which the Viennese artists who labelled their works ‘surrealist’ were working within the mould of French surrealism is a subject of debate. For example, Christine Ivanović describes Viennese surrealism as ‘eine durchaus eigenständige Kunstrichtung, die sich grundsätzlich vom Surrealismus unterschied und auch unterscheiden wollte.’⁵⁷ She attributes this divergence in part to the Viennese art galleries, which exhibited very few surrealist works; to the ongoing influence of the *Jugendstil* and *Wiener Moderne* movements; and to the reception by Viennese surrealists of French surrealism as an aesthetic of the irrational, at the expense of its political and social elements. Jean-Marie Valentin’s assessment of the conception of surrealism in post-war Vienna also suggests that the full import and diversity of the movement was not comprehended, but that it was perceived as ‘largement mythique ou, ce qui ne vaut pas guère mieux, réduit à quelques effets “bizarres”’.⁵⁸

This focus on irrationality seems to be confirmed by Jené’s description of his entry into the surrealist movement, on seeing for the first time Max Ernst’s cycle of collages entitled ‘Femme 100 Têtes’: ‘Seit diesem Tage fühle ich, daß der Weg ins Wunderbare durch das offene und zugleich geschlossene Tor des Irrationalen führt.’⁵⁹ Definitions of surrealism by other artists and theorists in later issues of *Plan* also focus on the irrational element. In 1947, the surrealist painter Arnulf Neuwirth translated the term ‘surrealism’ as ‘das Überwirkliche, [...] ein Hinauswachsen über das naturalistische Bild’, and

⁵⁷ Christine Ivanović, “‘des menschen farbe ist freiheit’: Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus”, in Goßens and Patka, pp. 62-70 (p. 63).

⁵⁸ Jean-Marie Valentin, ‘Une rencontre oubliée: Paul Celan et le peintre Edgar Jené’, *Études Germaniques*, 55/iii: *Paul Celan* (2000), 381-88 (p. 384). Like Schlebrügge, Valentin (p. 382) cites the popularity of Sedlmayer’s *Verlust der Mitte* as indicative of the widespread conservatism in Viennese society in the late 1940s, which left little space for avant-garde aesthetics.

⁵⁹ *Plan*, I/i (1938), 21. Quoted in Költzsch, p. 7.

described its aim as to remove the contrasts both between dream and reality and between discursive and unconscious thought; and to render visible the irrational.⁶⁰ The radio announcer Werner Riemerschmid, influential in avant-garde circles, also emphasised this alogical, irrational element:

Bei der surrealistischen Lyrik wird auch keine 'Hintergrundlogik' angestrebt, da *jede* Logik abgelehnt wird. Die surrealistischen Gebilde wollen nicht 'komponiert' sein. [...] Der Surrealismus will [...] 'konkrete Irrationalität'.⁶¹

This limiting definition of surrealism as an aesthetic of the irrational is reminiscent of early (1920s) French surrealism, as well as of the criticisms of the surrealist movement by conservative figures in post-war Vienna. These interpretations by Viennese surrealists of the surrealist aesthetic thus appear surprisingly outdated when compared to the developments in French surrealist theory by this time. As established in the first section of this chapter, French surrealism had by the mid-1930s moved away from its origins in such a celebration of the irrational and refusal of logic.

However, alongside this focus on the irrational, the Viennese surrealists did adhere to one of the key elements of French pre- and post-war surrealism: the desire for freedom. The quotation on the invitation to the first surrealist exhibition in Vienna (in March 1948) was a translated quotation from a poem by Breton: 'des Menschen Farbe ist Freiheit'.⁶² The Viennese surrealists' evident emphasis on the notion of freedom may be compared to that of the Romanian surrealists, and attributed in part to the oppression that members of both groups had experienced during the Second World War.

⁶⁰ Abu Nif (pseudonym of Arnulf Neuwirth), 'Surrealistische Vorposten in Wien', *Plan*, I (1946/47), 968, cited in Ivanović, 'Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus', p. 65.

⁶¹ Cited in Ivanović, 'Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus', p. 66 (Riemerschmid's emphasis).

⁶² This quotation was reproduced as follows at the top of the invitation: 'des menschen farbe ist freiheit - - - andré breton'. See Ivanović, 'Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus', p. 65.

Moreover, Jené's works exhibit an intense awareness of the destruction and suffering brought about by the Second World War. Jené's art is thus structured by an apparent contradiction: on the one hand, he accepts the celebration of the irrational typical of early French surrealism; and on the other, his works engage with external reality in a way that is atypical of that early form of surrealism. Georg-W. Koltzsch addresses this apparent paradox in his book on Jené entitled 'Schön ist nur das Wunderbare'. By taking this translation of a quotation from Breton's first manifesto as his title, Koltzsch expresses his view that Jené's work remained surrealist, in the Bretonian sense, throughout his life. Yet at the same time Koltzsch asserts that Jené's art rarely arose from free association, and that it suggested 'kein trancehaftes Herausheben von nie gesehenen Welten', but rather that it is always based on the existing world. Consequently, during the war years and in the period immediately afterwards Jené's sketches were clearly related to the war: 'Reflexe gegenwärtigen Erlebens'.⁶³ Jené thus exemplifies the fact that adherence to Breton's surrealist movement need not entail an exclusive focus on inner worlds, at the expense of attention to the external world, but could be allied with an engagement with reality.

5 Conclusion

This account of the development of French surrealism, and its similarities to Romanian and Austrian surrealism, has established the difficulty of defining surrealism and demonstrated the central importance of both past and present material reality to the surrealist movements of the 1930s and 1940s in Paris, Bucharest and Vienna. A dialectical approach also remains constant across these varying manifestations of surrealist aesthetics, and is connected to a celebration of permanent renewal. While this

⁶³ Koltzsch, p. 36.

renewal is initially represented by Breton as the result of a disavowal of existing reality through the individual's surrender to the Unconscious, by the mid-1930s this disavowal has been superseded by the recognition that external and internal reality continually interact with one another. Consequently, surrealist theory comes to focus as much on external as on internal reality; and the memory of wartime destruction in particular becomes an integral part of the surrealist dialectic. Moreover, the surrender to the Unconscious is replaced by a reflective approach to its manifestations; and the theoretical, existential freedom called for in Breton's manifestos in the 1920s is fused in the 1930s and 40s with a political ideal of liberation.

This nuanced appreciation of the range of theoretical positions within surrealism, and in particular of its evolution over the decades, provides a basis on which to evaluate Celan's reception of the movement in his translations and poetological writings. Nevertheless, critical evaluations of the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism have almost exclusively compared his work to an idealised version of 1920s surrealism. The next chapter begins with an examination of potential explanations for this limited definition of surrealism, before showing that this restricted view of the movement results in analyses that fail to engage sufficiently constructively with Celan's relationship to surrealism, since they do not take account of the breadth of the surrealist movement, nor of the parallels between certain elements of Celan's poetics and surrealist theory.

Chapter 2

Celan and Surrealism

The previous chapter established the diversity of the surrealist movement, and explored the particular manifestations of the movement with which Celan came into direct contact, namely the groups in Bucharest and Vienna. These forms of surrealism differ substantially from the early French surrealism of Breton's first manifesto and of the subject's surrender to the Unconscious through automatic writing. They are defined instead by a celebration of freedom, a reflective treatment of the Unconscious, and a pervasive awareness of destruction, all of which are also central to French surrealism of the 1930s and 1940s. However, research to date into potential connections between Celan's aesthetics and surrealism has focused on a conception of surrealism that is based more on French surrealism in the 1920s than on any of these later manifestations. This chapter begins by exploring the potential reasons for this restricted approach, through considerations of the reception of surrealism in West Germany, of the negative correlation between Celan's poetry and surrealism in reviews in the early 1950s, and of the so-called Goll Affair, in which Celan was accused of plagiarising Yvan Goll's poetry. I argue that these contexts have shaped critics' investigations into the connections between Celan and surrealism, so that their focus has been predominantly on demonstrating that Celan's poetry cannot be categorised as surrealist, rather than on considerations of possible points of contact.

1 The reception of surrealism in West Germany

While interest in the avant-garde, particularly surrealism, was widespread enough in post-war Vienna to support journals such as *Plan*, West German literary circles were less receptive to the movement. Böschenstein-Schäfer's analysis of surrealist elements in twentieth-century German literature (1970) attests to the failure of surrealism to penetrate the literary consciousness of West Germany.¹ She states categorically that there was no literary movement in twentieth-century Germany that could be considered parallel to the French surrealist movement. Focusing on post-war West Germany, she claims that surrealist poetry was not viewed there as a movement, as was the case with surrealist art, but instead that each surrealist poem was received as an independent text, 'et il fut moins admis en sa qualité de "surréaliste" qu'en sa qualité de "poème moderne", post-rimbaldien, de poème "absolu", libéré des voies de la logique et du réalisme conventionnels.'² Böschenstein-Schäfer also attributes the rejection of French surrealism to the literary climate of the 1960s, in which engagement with the political situation was encouraged (for which she cites the example of the popularity of Bertolt Brecht's final poems), so that the apparently absolute, hermetic or experimental poem was less favourably received.

Bernhard Albers, who edited an anthology of German surrealist texts published in 1995, also provides evidence that West German literary circles lacked interest in the surrealist movement. He points out that no publishing house was willing to publish a German

¹ Böschenstein-Schäfer, 'Eléments surréalistes dans la littérature allemande', pp. 283-301.

² Ibid., p. 285. As an example Böschenstein-Schäfer gives Hans Magnus Enzensberger's anthology *Museum der modernen Poesie* (1960), which contained poems by such poets as Breton, Aragon, Hans Arp, Desnos and Pierre Reverdy. Yet these poems, by surrealists or former surrealists, were presented not as representatives of a movement, but as individual components of the contemporary poetic landscape. Celan's translations of two poems by Desnos were included in this collection, and are discussed in Chapter 6.

translation of Maurice Nadeau's seminal work, *Histoire du surréalisme* (1948).³ Albers notes that, although German surrealist artists and writers had been involved in the international surrealist movement from its early stages (he names as examples Hans Arp, Max Ernst, Meret Oppenheim and Goll), the movement did not take root strongly in West Germany after the Second World War, and the various surrealist writers and artists who were in West Germany never formed a group in the same way as the Paris-based surrealists were able to do.

Albers's analysis of the status of surrealism in post-war Germany is confirmed by journalistic reports on the gatherings of the *Gruppe 47*. This was a group of authors founded in 1947 by Hans Werner Richter to promote and support contemporary West German, Austrian and Swiss literature, and which subsequently exerted a dominant influence on the parameters of mainstream West German literature during the early post-war decades. A newspaper report on the 1949 meeting of the group in Marktbreit questions the extent to which avant-garde modes of writing had been accepted into the dominant literary sphere:

Der Surrealismus in der Lyrik, dessen Einbruch in Deutschland ein wenig verspätet, nämlich erst nach dem letzten Krieg erfolgte, begegnet offenbar auch in der jüngeren Generation selbst einem aus dem Willen zur Form geborenen wachsenden Widerstand. Kurz: es ist fraglich, ob die 'Avantgarde' wirklich noch vorn steht.⁴

The critical reception of surrealism in post-war Germany goes some way to explaining the negative tone that this term has acquired when used to describe Celan's poetry. The

³ Bernhard Albers (ed.), *Aus geräucherten Steinen. Texte deutscher Surrealisten* (Aachen: Rimbaud, 1995), p. 5.

⁴ Friedrich Minssen, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 May 1949, quoted in R.H. Lettau, *Die Gruppe 47* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1967), p. 41.

almost universal rejection by scholars, from the 1960s onwards, of a significant relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism may be due in part to two other circumstances: firstly, critics' categorisation of his poetry in the early 1950s as surrealist; and secondly, the plagiarism charge against him in the 1950s and early 1960s.

2 The reception of *Mohn und Gedächtnis*

The reception in West Germany of Celan's first West German publication, *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952; I, 7-78), largely represents his poetry as being reminiscent of surrealism and therefore as outdated and derivative. The following survey of this reception shows that one of the principal aspects of Celan's poetry that was considered to be surrealist was his use of genitive metaphor. Such metaphors are also at the basis of the accusation that Celan had plagiarised the work of the surrealist poet Goll. Therefore, before exploring the critical debate over Celan's relationship to surrealism, these two key features of that debate will be examined.

The prevailing view during the early 1950s was that Celan was a surrealist poet, principally because it was thought that he used surrealist techniques and that his poetry was exemplary of *poésie pure* (i.e. lacking reference to external reality, a mode considered to be surrealist). This perception is evident in both implicit and explicit references to the surrealist qualities of Celan's poetry in reviews of his work in the early 1950s. In a discussion of the *Gruppe 47* meeting in 1952, at which Celan read some of his poems, including 'Todesfuge', the author and founding member of the *Gruppe 47* Hans Georg Brenner describes Celan's writing as 'poésie pure'.⁵ In separate reviews of *Mohn und*

⁵ Hans Georg Brenner, 'Kritisches und Selbstkritisches. Zur Tagung der "Gruppe 47"', *Literatur* (Munich), 1/vi (1952), 1-2. Cf. Heinz Piontek, 'Rezension zu *Mohn und Gedächtnis*', *Welt und Wort*, 8/vi (1953), 200-01; and Helmut M. Braem, '1945-1953', in Hermann Friedmann und Otto Mann (eds), *Deutsche Literatur im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Gestalten und Strukturen* (Heidelberg: Rothe, 1954), pp. 419-41. Brenner's description of Celan as an Austrian poet signals his reluctance to address Celan's Jewish

Gedächtnis, poets Helmut de Haas and Karl Krolow both note an unspecified debt to surrealism. Several critics suggest that Celan uses methods that are either implicitly or explicitly described as surrealist: for example, Rino Sanders claims that Celan uses surrealist stylistic methods; Walter Schmähling refers to Celan's free play with words; and Hans Egon Holthusen asserts that Celan's poetry is defined by free association and structured by the principle of polarity.⁶

The negative evaluation of the surrealist aesthetic, which was typical of the period, is also evident in several of these responses to Celan's early poetry, such as in Andreas Donath's review of *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. Donath praises 'Todesfuge', but goes on to express his disappointment that, in all the other poems in the volume, Celan has apparently regressed to the 'surrealistischen Inspirationsvorgang des "Diktats" aus dem Unbewußten'.⁷ And Günther Deicke's extremely negative response to Celan's first two volumes (*Mohn und Gedächtnis* and *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955)) clearly expresses the extent to which the surrealist movement was considered to be outdated: 'Wer kann denn heute noch an einem Surrealismus Geschmack finden, wie ihn der [...] (vermutlich sehr begabte) Paul Celan praktiziert?'.⁸

Holthusen's comments on *Mohn und Gedächtnis* represent one of the most virulent attacks on Celan's perceived recourse to French surrealist techniques, and indeed the vehemence

background and therefore his experience of the Holocaust, a context that the label 'poésie pure' also conveniently avoids.

⁶ Rino Sanders, 'Ein neuer deutscher Lyriker', *Zeit*, 18 (June 1953), 6; Walter Schmähling, 'Zwischen Tradition und Experiment: Neue Gedichte', *Bücher-Kom*, 2/iii (1953), 15; and Hans Egon Holthusen, 'Fünf junge Lyriker', *Merkur*, 8 (1954), 284-94 and 378-90. Reprinted in Holthusen, *Ja und Nein: Neue kritische Versuche* (Munich: Piper, 1954), pp. 124-65.

⁷ Andreas Donath, 'Rezension zu *Mohn und Gedächtnis*', *FrH*, 9/xi (1954), 868-70.

⁸ Günther Deicke, 'Wo steht die deutsche Gegenwartslyrik? Bemerkungen zu einer westdeutschen Anthologie', *Heute und Morgen*, 3 (1955), 151-62.

of Holthusen's criticism suggests a level of anti-French sentiment.⁹ Holthusen accuses Celan of merely employing the techniques of modern French poetry in his German texts, and hence creating poems that bear no relation to the external world. Instead, he claims that Celan's poems are generated entirely by internal sound associations. Holthusen thus argues that the absolute imaginative freedom in Celan's poems allows the reader a similar level of interpretative freedom. In other words, on this account Celan does not attempt to communicate anything specific to the reader, but rather the readers are left to draw their own interpretations from this complete freedom of association. Terms and phrases such as 'Willkür'; 'ungegenständlich'; 'eine *innere* Wirklichkeit'; and 'reines Spiel der Sprache' suggest Holthusen's rejection of the meaningfulness of such poetry, an impression that is confirmed by the inverted commas that he places around the words 'Sinn' and 'Bedeutung'.¹⁰ Holthusen consequently argues that Celan's interest lies solely in aesthetic expression, aligning his poetry with the Symbolist poets' attempts to lend poetry the expressive qualities of music. Holthusen's comparisons between Celan's writing and French poetry, like the other reviews discussed above in which Celan's work is aligned with surrealism, contain the implicit criticism that Celan's poetry is dated, derivative and un-German.

3 The 'Goll Affair'

Celan met the Alsatian and Jewish poet Goll in November 1949 in Paris, and a close friendship developed between the two men, during which Goll requested that Celan translate some of his French poems into German. Goll was already suffering from leukaemia when he met Celan, and he died at the end of February 1950, making his wife, Claire Goll, executor of his literary estate. At her request, Celan continued with the

⁹ In this essay, Holthusen introduces Celan as essentially foreign: 'In Paul Celan, der am östlichen Rande des deutschen Sprachgebiets, in Czernowitz, geboren wurde und seit vielen Jahren in Paris lebt, begegnet uns ein Fremdling und Außenseiter der dichterischen Rede.' Holthusen, *Ja und Nein*, p. 155.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 157-158.

translations of her husband's poems, but at the beginning of 1952 they were rejected by a publisher. In her annotated collection of all the documents related to the affair, Wiedemann provides evidence that this rejection was at Claire Goll's request.¹¹ It was at this point that the friendship between Claire Goll and Celan ended, to be replaced by the former's growing insistence that Celan had plagiarised her husband's poems. This belief was expressed by Claire Goll from 1953 onwards, in private correspondence and in anonymous letters to journalists and publishers, before she finally made it fully public in an article for the Munich-based literary journal *Baubudenpoet* in 1960.¹² Wiedemann's research shows that Claire Goll had been supported and encouraged in this campaign by the poet and critic Richard Exner, then an Assistant Professor at Princeton University.

The accusation of plagiarism was taken up, according to Wiedemann 'weitgehend ungeprüft', by the main German daily and weekly newspapers.¹³ Friends and acquaintances of Celan, as well as the *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*, came to his defence almost immediately, but the damage had already been done. As Wiedemann writes of the letters and articles refuting the plagiarism claim:

Diese Beiträge verhindern jedoch nicht, daß die von Claire Goll und ihren Helfern formulierten Vorwürfe, wenn auch teilweise in gemilderter Form, in Standardwerke zur deutschen Lyrik nach 1945 Eingang finden oder nach Celans Tod in teilweise scharfer Form wiederaufgenommen und zur Begründung neuer Plagiatvorwürfe herangezogen werden.¹⁴

¹¹ Wiedemann, *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre. Dokumente zu einer 'Infamie'* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 7.

¹² Claire Goll, 'Unbekanntes über Paul Celan', *Baubudenpoet*, 1 (1959/60), 115-16.

¹³ Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 8.

The genitive metaphors, which Holthusen highlighted as an example of what he considered to be Celan's derivative surrealist style, also form the basis of the plagiarism accusations.¹⁵ In a letter of 13 October 1956 to the author Alfred Andersch, Exner states that he and Claire Goll had noticed a striking similarity between Celan's line 'Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheissung' ('Spät und Tief', 1948) and Goll's phrases 'moulin de la mort' and 'mûrit le blé blanc de la mort' in *Les cercles magiques* (1951).¹⁶ The widespread fierce reaction from those who considered the accusation defamatory, such as the poets Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Klaus Demus and Ingeborg Bachmann, set a precedent for future criticism.¹⁷ The accusation became such a sensitive issue that, in subsequent years, for scholars to continue to align Celan with the surrealist movement, even without making any specific reference to Goll, carried associations of supporting the plagiarism accusations. It is in part these circumstances that have rendered the comparison of Celan's oeuvre to surrealism a marginal issue within Celan scholarship.

4 Celan scholars define surrealism

The following section of this chapter explores the development of the debate about the surrealist attributes of Celan's poetry in order to demonstrate that evaluations either of his work's resonance with, or of difference from, surrealist aesthetics are based on a limited definition of surrealism that does not take full account of the wide range of aesthetic positions within that movement. In fact, since the international surrealist movement was far from homogeneous, an assessment of the relationship between

¹⁵ Holthusen, *Ja und Nein*, p. 158.

¹⁶ Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 244. Exner's letter was written in response to a letter from Andersch, in his role as editor of the journal *Texte und Zeichen*, on 5 October 1956. Exner had submitted some translations of Wallace Stevens's poems for publication in *Texte und Zeichen*. Andersch wrote expressing interest in publishing the translations, but noting that he could not expect Exner, as spokesperson for Claire Goll in the plagiarism dispute, to work with a journal that clearly repudiated the plagiarism charges.

¹⁷ See, for example, the 'Entgegnung' by the three cited authors, published in *Die Neue Rundschau*, 3 (1960) and reprinted in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, pp. 280-83.

Celan's poetry and surrealism must set that poetry against the full range of aesthetic positions that have been described as 'surrealist'. A distinction must also be drawn between pre- and post-war surrealism, and between the surrealist aesthetics of Paris, Bucharest and Vienna, since Celan showed more interest in Breton's poetic and theoretical works of the 1930s and 1940s than in his manifestos;¹⁸ and because it was with the Romanian and Austrian surrealist groups that Celan came into closest, sometimes collaborative, contact. Therefore, the range of possible interpretations of the surrealist aesthetic must be kept in mind in an analysis of scholarship on Celan's relationship to surrealism.

The following survey of responses to the perceived relationship between Celan and surrealism shows that the evaluation of that relationship is largely dependent on each critic's individual, sometimes narrow, understanding of what constitutes surrealism. Those who tend towards the view that Celan was never surrealist conceive of that movement as an aesthetic that is entirely divorced from reality, and in particular from any past reality. By contrast, critics who argue that surrealist elements can be detected throughout Celan's oeuvre focus on the absurd nature of reality and on the central significance of the dream within surrealist theory and poetic praxis. A third group of critics asserts that Celan's poetry gradually became less surrealist during the 1950s. Although this approach appears to allow more flexibility, in that it does admit the possibility of a development in Celan's poetics, the concomitant conception of the surrealist movement among such critics is the narrowest. In these studies, the focus is

¹⁸ For example, in the late 1940s, Celan translated Breton's poem 'Guerre' (1944), and Böschenstein-Schäfer claims that Celan greatly admired Breton's text *Arcane 17* (1944). See Chapter 5 and Böschenstein-Schäfer's article, 'Traum und Sprache in der Dichtung Paul Celans', in Amy Colin (ed.), *Argumentum e Silentio: International Paul Celan Symposium* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), pp. 223-36 (p. 223). Romanian critic Ovid Crohmălniceanu, an acquaintance of Celan, also reports that Celan read *Arcane 17* during his stay in Bucharest. Crohmălniceanu, 'Bruchstücke einer Erinnerung', *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 3 (1982), 213-14 (p. 214).

almost exclusively on early surrealist techniques, such as automatic writing and dream reports.

(a) Celan's realism as anti-surrealism

Klaus Voswinckel's monograph (1972), one of the first studies of Celan's complete oeuvre, contends that there is a strong political element to Celan's work. Voswinckel demonstrates this political commitment by showing that Celan rejects Novalis's vision of a 'Poetisierung der Welt', arguing that Novalis's representation of the world suggests the potential for a utopia that Celan knows is impossible. Within this study, Voswinckel's brief comparison of Celan's poetry with surrealism is based on a limited view of surrealist aesthetics.¹⁹ He defines surrealism solely as automatic writing, despite accepting that surrealist poetry never conformed to this theoretical ideal described in Breton's first manifesto. He is therefore able to distance Celan's poetry categorically from the surrealist project purely on the basis that the poetry does not appear to be automatic.²⁰ The pitfalls of such a view of the surrealist aesthetic are evident in the passage immediately following Voswinckel's discounting of any similarity between Celan and the surrealists. Here, the author argues that Celan's poetry is structured by contradiction. He considers that the consistent undermining of positive statements in Celan's poetry reflects the poet's radical questioning of the existing conditions of external reality. As my investigation into the surrealist movement has shown, such a rejection of the *status quo* was also one of the motivating forces behind that movement.²¹

¹⁹ Klaus Voswinckel, *Paul Celan: Verweigerte Poesie der Welt. Versuch einer Deutung* (Heidelberg: Stiehm, 1972), pp. 119-20.

²⁰ In order for Voswinckel's argument to be viable, he has to state explicitly that he is focusing on Breton's theoretical conception of surrealism in the first manifesto, and ignoring the ways in which surrealist poetry differed from this dogmatic ideal: 'Sieht man einmal davon ab, daß dieses Programm [Breton's definition of surrealism in his first manifesto] nie ganz mit der surrealistischen Praxis übereinstimmte, so gab es doch viele Vorstöße in die von ihm angewiesene Richtung.' Ibid., p. 119.

²¹ Ibid., p. 120.

The only monograph entirely devoted to Celan's relationship to the surrealist movement, that by Lielo Anne Pretzer (1980), is able to explore in more detail the complex of similarities and differences between Celan's poetics and surrealist aesthetics.²² Like Voswinckel's, this study conceives of surrealism as an aesthetic that is divorced from reality; yet it also recognises surrealist elements in Celan's oeuvre in the form of a preoccupation with dream imagery. Pretzer's representation of surrealism as being entirely detached from reality results principally from her almost exclusive recourse to Breton's texts from the 1920s (his two manifestos and his novel *Nadja* (1928)) in order to define surrealism. Considering the central position that social and political reality take in Pretzer's consideration of Celan's poetry, it is surprising that she does not take account of the extreme social and political engagement shown by Breton from the late 1920s onwards. Instead, Pretzer focuses on the surrealist (and originally Freudian) notion of descent into the Unconscious as the path towards poetic creation, and argues that Celan's extensive use of dream imagery and of images of descent is analogous to that idea. However, she maintains that Celan's oeuvre is ultimately not surrealist because this involvement with the Unconscious is always compromised by the conscious memory of the recent past, in particular that of the Holocaust. The attempt to descend to an unburdened Unconscious thus always fails because Celan simultaneously attempts to recall the murdered Jews.²³ Similarly, according to Pretzer the dreams alluded to in Celan's poems are not surrealist because they are not only ways of escaping reality, but also contain memories of past reality. Pretzer thus ultimately argues that Celan's poetry cannot be surrealist because access to the Unconscious is always compromised by the persistence of conscious memories.

²² Lielo Anne Pretzer, *Geschichts- und sozialkritische Dimensionen in Paul Celans Werk: Eine Untersuchung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung avantgardistisch-Surrealistischer Aspekte* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980).

²³ Pretzer, p. 112.

Pretzer's assertion that Celan's poetry is incompatible with surrealist aesthetics because of the insistent memory of the Holocaust is also at the basis of several other analyses of Celan's poetry. All of these analyses rely on a conception of surrealism as a theory of the Unconscious that requires a rejection of external reality. For example, in his analysis of Celan's relationship to surrealism, in particular to Romanian surrealism, Guțu (1990) concludes that Celan's poetry could not remain surrealist because the poet remained committed to engaging with reality, apparently unlike the surrealist poets.²⁴ Böschenstein-Schäfer (1970) also emphasises the allegorical nature of Celan's poetry, thereby suggesting an ordering principle that denies the possibility of the poetry having been created by unconscious association.²⁵ However, Rainer Warning's analysis of Éluard's poetry (1982) emphasises precisely the allegorical nature of that poet's writing, even while he was still formally a member of Breton's surrealist group. Warning's sensitive reading of the close reference to external reality in Éluard's poems thus suggests that the label 'surrealist' does not exclude the use of allegory as a way of relating to external reality.²⁶

Pretzer's argument that the significance of past reality in Celan's poetry excludes him from the surrealist aesthetic is invalidated by the insights into Romanian surrealism given by Guțu and by Wiedemann. Wiedemann makes explicit reference to the dialectical relationship between memory and oblivion in Romanian surrealist texts, a relationship that Pretzer identifies as particularly Celanian and specifically non-surrealist.²⁷ And both Guțu and Wiedemann emphasise the role of past reality, in particular the destruction of

²⁴ Guțu, *Die Lyrik Paul Celans*, pp. 101-02.

²⁵ Böschenstein-Schäfer, 'Allegorische Züge in der Dichtung Paul Celans', *Études Germaniques*, 25 (1970), 251-64.

²⁶ Rainer Warning, 'Surrealistische Totalität und die Partialität der Moderne: Zur Lyrik Paul Éluards', in Warning and Winfried Wehle (eds), *Lyrik und Malerei der Avantgarde* (Munich: Fink, 1982), pp. 481-519.

²⁷ Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, pp. 116-17. Guțu's quotation of a line from Teodorescu's poetry, 'Ich kann im zerstörten Gedächtnis nichts löschen', exemplifies this dialectical relationship between memory and oblivion. The implication is not that memory itself is destroyed but that the memory contains such destruction that it can neither be fully restored nor entirely forgotten. Guțu, *Die Lyrik Paul Celans*, p. 98.

the Second World War, in the Romanian surrealists' poetry. My comparison of post-war Romanian surrealism with French surrealist texts from the same period has shown a similar concern with past and present reality in French surrealism. Therefore, the assertion of the importance of reality in Celan's poetry does not automatically define his poetry as non-surrealist, provided the dynamic nature of the surrealist movement is taken into account.

(b) Celan's surrealist reality

Pretzer's methodological approach may be described as a definition of surrealism through reference to Breton's early theoretical texts; a focus on Celan's syntax and dream imagery to establish his relationship to surrealism; and the claim that the Holocaust is the motivating force behind his oeuvre. All of these elements are present also in Clarise Samuels's study of Celan's relationship to surrealist and existentialist aesthetics (1993).²⁸ Yet Samuels's account diverges from Pretzer's in her view of the status of the Holocaust in that relationship. While Pretzer ultimately argues that this focus on past reality detaches Celan's work from surrealist aesthetics, Samuels considers the particular nature of that past to be wholly consonant with the surrealist mode of representation. Samuels highlights Celan's use of surrealist techniques, in the form of genitive metaphors; paradox; neologisms; and the juxtaposition of contradictory ideas, in order to create an 'atmosphere of absurdity' that represents what she views as the absurd nature of Holocaust reality.²⁹

²⁸ Clarise Samuels, *Holocaust Visions: Surrealism and Existentialism in the Poetry of Paul Celan* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993).

²⁹ In the second section of her study, Samuels argues that Celan built an existentialist ideology out of this surrealist syntax. She identifies links between surrealism and existentialism on the basis of the common emphasis on the individual; on the creation of one's own reality; and on the notions of contradiction and authenticity. Her argument loses much of its credibility when she seems to suggest that Celan chose the theme of the Holocaust because it suited his surrealist-existentialist aesthetics: 'Celan took a universe based on historical reality and extrapolated from it a model for the nature of reality as he saw it. [The Holocaust universe provides] an epistemological framework that is

Those critics who, like Samuels, argue that Celan's apparently surrealist techniques reflect his view that reality is absurd also tend to define surrealism principally as a collection of formal techniques, such as the use of paradox, juxtaposition and genitive metaphor. For instance, P.P. Schwarz (1966) highlights instances of paradox, contradiction and wordplay in Celan's poems. However, Schwarz states that rather than being 'willkürlich' (as Holthusen claimed), this alogical style represents an attack on the current state of reality, according to which all conventional expectations have been turned upside down by the ubiquity of death and destruction. Guțu also links surrealism to Celan's experience of the Holocaust, arguing that the surrealist aesthetic appealed to Celan during the late 1940s because of the difficulty he had in coping with his recent experiences. Thus, the 'verworrene Bilder' of surrealism were appropriate for the confused, lost and homeless poet.³⁰

Marlies Janz (1976) and Jerry Glenn (1977) also argue that Celan's early poetry uses dream imagery to express protest against reality. However, Janz observes that the utopian element of these dreams suggests the necessity of a new reality to replace the current debased conditions; while Glenn focuses on Celan's 'nightmarish' visions, equating these with Celan's perception of the reality of the Second World War and the Holocaust.³¹ Glenn shows that, as Celan's oeuvre develops, this treatment of dream is replaced by an 'intellectualisation' of dream imagery, by which he means an increased level of reflection on the nature of dream, rather than mere reports of dream content. Although Glenn uses

existentialist in nature, and one that permits the examination of existence and our understanding of reality.' Samuels, p. 109.

³⁰ Guțu, *Die Lyrik Paul Celans*, pp. 85-86.

³¹ Jerry Glenn, 'Nightmares, dreams and intellectualization', *World Literature Today* (1977), 522-24. Janz, pp. 22-23. Glenn's reading thus parallels Samuels's analyses, such as in the latter's description of Celan's poetic landscape as 'a dreamlike landscape, but in keeping with Celan's negative vision, it is a dream that has gone awry. In fact, it is a nightmare.' Samuels, p. 108.

this observation to argue that Celan's use of dream imagery gradually distances itself from the surrealist treatment of dream, this shift from dream narrative to a more reflective approach to dream mirrors the development within the French surrealist movement itself, as exemplified in particular by Éluard's treatment of dream and by Breton's dream reports in *Les Vases communicants*.³²

(c) Celan's surrealist techniques

Critics who argue that Celan's poetry was surrealist during the 1940s and that it then gradually distanced itself from that aesthetic also tend to define surrealism according to its formal techniques.³³ For example, Janz (1976) states that Celan was only surrealist in his short-lived thematisation of pleasure (Freudian *Lust*), and that he never used specifically surrealist techniques, although she omits to specify what these techniques may be.³⁴ Pöggeler (1984) affirms that Celan's early poems were influenced by surrealist techniques, but that his awareness of the limitations of those methods led him to focus instead on linguistic scepticism, mysticism and anarchy. However, Pöggeler makes no comment on the presence of all three of these elements, nor of the decreasing use of techniques such as automatic writing, in surrealist aesthetics from the late 1920s on. Leonard Olschner (1985) also focuses on surrealist techniques in his assertion that Celan moved away from surrealism because his particular search for meaning could not be fulfilled using surrealist methods.³⁵

³² Böschenstein-Schäfer argues, along the same lines as Glenn, that Celan's treatment of dream remains reflective, since reality is so horrific that the consciousness must remain permanently vigilant and never switch off. She therefore argues that Celan's poems are not examples of dream narratives, but rather, dream functions in the poems as a structuring principle. Böschenstein-Schäfer, 'Traum und Sprache', p. 226.

³³ It is interesting to note that, unlike most of the studies written afterwards, one of the earliest critical responses to Celan's poetry made a clear distinction between early and late surrealism. For in her PhD thesis (1950) Christiane Draxlmayer compared Celan's poetry to late surrealism, after the rejection of techniques such as automatic writing. Draxlmayer, 'Die Österreichische Lyrik im Zeitraum 1945-50' (Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1950).

³⁴ Janz, p. 217

³⁵ Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab. Erläuterungen zu Paul Celans Gedichtübertragungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), pp. 139-147.

Wiedemann's consideration of Romanian surrealist aesthetics makes a crucial contribution to this debate by introducing a more nuanced appreciation of the diversity of the surrealist project. The distinction that she makes between surrealist techniques and surrealist theory is essential to an evaluation of the complexity of Celan's relationship to the surrealist movement. Wiedemann observes that, although Celan did indeed gradually stop using the more traditional surrealist techniques (principally the reference to dream and the use of genitive metaphors) in his poetry, he retained a range of surrealist ideas and perspectives that surface in his poetics. Examples are found in Celan's key poetological speeches, the *Bremer Rede* (1958; III, 185-86) and his Büchner Prize speech (1960; III, 187-202).³⁶ Such a distinction between surrealist techniques and theories is necessary in order to avoid a limited definition of the surrealist movement and thus provides an appropriate basis on which to explore Celan's relationship to the full range of ideas and themes within that highly diverse movement.

Timothy Boyd's recent monograph on erotic aspects of Celan's poetry (2006) has made a similarly positive contribution to the consideration of Celan's relationship to surrealism, by accepting that Celan's poetics both differ from and resemble certain aspects of the surrealist aesthetic. Through a consideration of the surrealist elements in Celan's Bucharest writings, which draws substantially on Wiedemann's analyses of these texts, Boyd concludes that there are 'spezifische Distanzierungen aber auch bestimmte

³⁶ Wiedemann, *Antschel Paul – Paul Celan*, pp. 148-5. Guțu also identifies similarities between Celan's *Meridian* poetics and the Romanian surrealists' theories, since those writers conceive of poetry as an expression of protest against the prevailing conditions of external reality. So Naum's and Teodorescu's desire 'der Zeit zum Trotz weiter zu atmen' is compared to Celan's assertion in *Der Meridian*: 'Dichtung, das kann eine Atemwende bedeuten' (III, 195). Guțu, *Die Lyrik Paul Celans*, p. 100

Verbundenheiten' between Celan and the surrealists.³⁷ By remaining aware of the diversity of aesthetic positions within the surrealist movement, Boyd is able to explore the similarities and differences between Celan's early texts and surrealist texts. Thus one of his principal conclusions is that Celan rejected surrealist dogma, but remained open to selected elements of the surrealist aesthetic, such as the central role of erotic desire in existential, intellectual and artistic experience.³⁸ In this vein, Boyd compares Celan's love poetry with that by Éluard, stating: 'Es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, daß die poetologischen Potenzierungen, die Éluard in seiner Liebeslyrik in diesem Bereich erzielte, Celan angesteckt haben.' This assessment is based on Warning's argument (outlined above) that Éluard's poetry was carefully structured and by no means arbitrary, automatic dream imagery.³⁹ However, the fact that this highly suggestive proposition is relegated to a footnote is indicative of the marginal nature of such ideas, even in contemporary Celan scholarship.

The more nuanced view of the relationship between Celan's poetics and surrealist theory that is beginning to emerge in current research on Celan is most evident in Florence Pennone's recent monograph on Celan's versions of French poems (2007).⁴⁰ This study makes a significant contribution to the debate by showing that existing views of the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism over-emphasise the extent to which Celan rejected surrealist theory. For example, Pennone's reading of 'Edgar Jené' draws attention to remarkable resemblances between that essay and Breton's surrealist theory, so making a compelling case for the notion that Celan allied his poetics with those surrealist ideas during the late 1940s, and attempted to integrate them into his own view

³⁷ Timothy Boyd, *'dunkeler gespannt': Untersuchungen zur Erotik der Dichtung Paul Celans* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), p. 100.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 100-01.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴⁰ Florence Pennone, *Paul Celans Übersetzungspoetik. Entwicklungslinien in seinen Übertragungen französischer Lyrik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007).

of the status of language after the Second World War.⁴¹ However, Pennone compares Celan's theory in 'Edgar Jené' only to an early conception of surrealism, largely as it is represented in Breton's first manifesto. In this respect, her study in fact parallels precisely those scholars' approaches that she designates inadequate for, as this chapter has demonstrated, Celan's oeuvre is invariably compared to an ideal surrealism, based on 1920s surrealist theory.

Nevertheless, Pennone does move beyond a consideration of these classic surrealist texts when she considers similarities between surrealist theory and Celan's poetics of the late 1950s. In a series of footnotes Pennone indicates that a more nuanced view of surrealist aesthetics is necessary in order to examine fully the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism. Such a view implicitly entails a consideration of the diverse manifestations of the surrealist movement, rather than a sole focus on Breton's manifestos. For example, Pennone makes reference to the fact that even the most committed surrealist poets did not publish so-called automatic texts without having edited and re-worked them, and that this detail invalidates the commonly held view that Celan's poetry was not automatic and therefore could not be surrealist.⁴² In addition, she suggests that Celan's concept of encounter ('Begegnung'), at the core of his poetics in his Büchner Prize Speech, recalls Breton's concern with encounter and coincidence in his texts *Nadja* (1928), *Les Vases communicants* (1932) and *L'Amour fou* (1937). She therefore hypothesises that the concept of encounter may have its roots, *inter alia*, in Breton's writings, and remarks that one of Celan's poetological notes from the late 1950s uses the image of 'vases communicants' in the context of encounter.⁴³ This awareness of potential

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 99-104.

⁴² Ibid., p. 107. She cites Voswinckel (p. 119 and p. 171) and Janz (p. 217) as examples of this argument that 'Celan habe selber keine automatischen Text verfasst und sei also kein Surrealist gewesen.'

⁴³ Pennone, p. 103.

connections between Celan's poetics and surrealism in the late 1950s, and during the composition of his Büchner Prize Speech, nevertheless remains marginal in Pennone's work, since the discussion is conducted almost exclusively in footnotes. This approach therefore bears further witness to the marginal nature within Celan scholarship of any in-depth consideration of similarities between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism beyond the 1940s.

Indeed, Pennone's insights into potential connections between surrealism and Celan's writings in the late 1950s seem to be contradicted by her statement that Celan distanced himself from surrealist aesthetics in the early 1950s:

Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume zeugt jedenfalls von Celans unleugbarem Interesse für die surrealistische Bewegung der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit und von seiner Vertrautheit mit deren wichtigsten Thesen, auch wenn er sich bald von ihnen entfernen sollte.⁴⁴

This insistence that Celan ultimately rejected surrealist aesthetics anticipates the subsequent section of Pennone's study, in which she examines Celan's translations of poems by the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret.⁴⁵ Since in these analyses Pennone makes a compelling case for the idea that Celan's subtle alterations to Péret's poems constitute a reduction of their surrealist aspects, the focus of this part of her investigation rests on Celan's divergence from surrealist aesthetics, which she designates 'Abschied von dem Wunderbaren'. So it appears that any evidence of a convergence between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism remains subsidiary to Pennone's investigation into Celan's poetics of translation, which remains her prime concern. I argue, on the contrary, that an analysis of

⁴⁴ Pennone, p. 104.

⁴⁵ Pennone, pp. 104-21.

Celan's encounters with surrealist works demonstrates that his relationship to surrealism is intertwined with his poetics of translation, and that accordingly a consideration of the ongoing similarities between the two sets of aesthetics contributes to an understanding of those poetics.

5 Conclusion

This survey of critical assessments of the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealism has shown that Celan scholars have relied almost exclusively on a restrictive understanding of the surrealist aesthetic, generally based on the dogmatic surrealist theory of the early 1920s. Yet the analysis of the surrealist movement in the previous chapter has shown that such a monolithic aesthetic did not exist. Nevertheless, responses by Wiedemann, Boyd and Pennone provide exceptions to the general critical consensus. Wiedemann focuses on Romanian surrealism and differentiates clearly between surrealist theory and poetry, and thereby moves beyond surrealist formal techniques in order to develop a more nuanced impression of the diversity of surrealist aesthetics. Boyd indicates that a more open interpretation of the surrealist movement is necessary when considering Celan's oeuvre, by emphasising that the texts written by Celan in Bucharest suggest not that he rejected surrealism *per se*, but that he rejected the dogmatic version of that aesthetic propagated by Breton in the 1920s. However, since both Boyd and Wiedemann are concerned in this context principally with Celan's earlier poetry, their identification of probable links between Celan's later poetics and surrealist aesthetics is left unexplored. Pennone does consider Celan's later poetics and indicates the possibility of ongoing connections between surrealist theory and Celan's poetics. However, these considerations remain marginal to her main concern with the development of Celan's poetics of translation.

The lack of a monolithic surrealist aesthetic is the principal reason for the wide range of responses to the surrealist qualities of Celan's oeuvre. My survey of these responses demonstrates that it is possible to define surrealism selectively according to which texts and theorists one refers. For these reasons, any attempt to compare Celan's oeuvre to surrealism tends to generalise that movement, relying on a conception of surrealist aesthetics that does justice neither to the complexity of the movement itself, nor to Celan's experience of surrealism. Celan engaged with different aspects of surrealist theory and poetry at different stages of his poetic career, and this series of encounters provides a compelling basis for an assessment of the relationship between Celan's oeuvre and surrealist aesthetics. The following chapter begins an examination of these encounters by exploring one of Celan's first documented encounters with surrealist poetry.

Chapter 3

Translation as Homage: Celan and Éluard's *Capitale de la douleur*

On the tenth anniversary of Paul Éluard's death in November 1962, the French literary journal *Promesse* asked Celan for his views on the French poet. Celan responded as follows:

J'aime beaucoup la poésie de Paul Éluard, mais je n'ai pu, pour le moment, lui rendre hommage qu'à ma manière, c'est-à-dire autrement qu'en répondant aux enquêtes. D'ailleurs – c'est à Bucharest, après la guerre, que je l'ai connue, grâce aux jeunes poètes roumains, dont un, au moins, est un ami commun: Petre Solomon. C'est là que j'avais traduit, en allemand, *Capitale de la Douleur*.¹

It is impossible to assess whether Celan did indeed translate the whole of Éluard's early volume, *Capitale de la douleur* (1926), since these translations were never published, and only a handful of translations have been found among his papers. These are of the following poems: 'Pablo Picasso' (178), 'Georges Braque' (191-92), 'Entre autres' (143), 'La nuit' (193) and the cycle 'Les Petits justes' (151-52 and 173-74).² As Celan himself states, he produced these translations while he was in Bucharest between 1945 and 1947, and the manuscripts remained in the care of Celan's mentor, the Romanian poet Alfred Margul-Sperber, when Celan left Bucharest for Vienna. They are now held in Margul-

¹ Celan's comments on Éluard are from a letter to Herbert Juin, of the Bordeaux journal *Promesse* (7/8 November 1962). Quoted in Barbara Wiedemann, 'Richtungweisende Anfänge in Czernowitz und Bukarest', in Gellhaus (ed.), *Fremde Nähe*, pp. 109-21 (p. 119).

² The page numbers in brackets refer to Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I.

Sperber's archive in the Romanian Literary Museum in Bucharest.³ These manuscripts consist of Celan's handwritten drafts, sometimes several for the same poem. In the case of Celan's translation of 'Les Petits justes', a final version is presented as a publishable typescript with a title page and one poem to each page.

A study of these drafts gives an insight into the nature of Celan's homage to Éluard at this very early stage in his career as a poet and translator. Since the poems in question contain many elements that are typical of French surrealism in the early and mid-1920s, Celan's interaction with them demonstrates both his commitment to the surrealist cause as well as the way in which his poetic expression diverges from Éluard's. In order to establish where these divergences occur, this chapter begins by examining the surrealist features of Éluard's poems. These analyses are followed by close readings of Celan's translations. First, a brief survey of Éluard's oeuvre is necessary in order to contextualise the poems from *Capitale de la douleur*.

1 Paul Éluard: Biography and Poetics

Éluard was born in Paris in 1895. He fought in the First World War, and became involved with Dada in 1918, and then with Breton's surrealist movement in 1924. He remained a central figure of this group until his break with Breton in 1938.⁴ Éluard was twice married, to Elena Ivanovna Diakonova (1894-1982) from 1917-30 and Maria Benz (1906-46) from 1933-46. Benz died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage in 1946, and Éluard

³ The first publication of these translations was in an article by Romanian scholar George Guțu: "...Und dem Herzen träumt ein andres Land" (Jessenin). Paul Celans frühe Übersetzungen', *Zeitschrift der Germanisten Rumäniens*, 1 (1992), 50-54. The translations are printed in 'Paul Celan. Frühe Übersetzungen', *Zeitschrift der Germanisten Rumäniens*, 1 (1992), 43-45.

⁴ A letter written by Éluard in 1938 states his definitive break with Breton, which occurred during a discussion in a café. He gives as his reasons Breton's manner of discussing in front of others, his lack of seriousness, his puerile behaviour, his inconsistency and his bad faith. Éluard also implies that he rejects the unnecessarily dogmatic and isolationist path that the surrealist movement had taken, becoming 'une école, une chapelle littéraire.' Éluard, 'À H... De Paris, 1938', in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1537-38.

then met Odette Lemort (1914-2000) in 1949, who remained his partner until his death in 1952. Each of Éluard's partners was known by a nickname ('Gala', 'Nusch' and 'Dominique' respectively). Since these alternative names appear to be how they were generally known, and are invariably used in scholarly works, they are also used in the following discussion. Éluard joined the French Communist Party in 1926, as did most of the other principal members of the surrealist movement, but left it in 1931. Active in various anti-Fascist groups in the 1930s, Éluard was involved in the Resistance in occupied France during the Second World War, publishing poems under various pseudonyms. In line with this renewed political activity, he rejoined the Communist Party in 1943, and remained a member until his death. In the years following the Second World War Éluard acted on his pacifist commitment by travelling the world making speeches against war and oppression.⁵ During this time his poetry also became increasingly political. Éluard died of heart failure in 1952.

The Éluard scholar Raymond Jean wrote in 1968 that attempts to categorise Éluard's poetry are limiting, since any single label fails to grasp the diversity of his oeuvre. Jean states that the principal ways in which Éluard has been received are as a Dadaist, a surrealist, a love poet, and a poet of 'le regard', the last term referring to the importance of vision in Éluard's poetry and poetics.⁶ In view of the political focus in many of Éluard's later poems, a designation as political poet should be added to this list. Moreover, a closer look at these potential categories reveals that they can all be linked by the broad theme of love, which suffuses all Éluard's work.⁷ Therefore, the following

⁵ See Jean-Yves Debreuille, *Éluard ou Le pouvoir du mot* (Paris: Nizet, 1977), p. 131, for details of Éluard's principal activities during this period.

⁶ Raymond Jean, *Paul Éluard par lui-même* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968), p. 7.

⁷ Cf. Debreuille's contention (1998) that the title of Éluard's collection *L'Amour la Poésie* (1929) represents an absolute and definitive equivalence. See Debreuille, 'Aspects du discours amoureux dans la poésie d'Éluard', in Collette Guedj (ed.), *Éluard a cent ans. Actes du colloque de Nice, janvier 1996* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), pp. 59-72 (p. 59).

introduction to Éluard's poetry will examine how the various themes of his poetry all relate to that of love. This approach will also provide a fruitful contextualisation for the study of Celan's only published translation of a poem by Éluard, 'Nous avons fait la nuit' (1935), itself a love poem, to be discussed further in Chapter 7 below.

Although Éluard broke with Breton in 1938, scholars tend to agree that he remained committed to the principles of surrealism throughout his life.⁸ Jean considers that this essential surrealist element is demonstrated by Éluard's continued commitment to love, yet acknowledges that Éluard's treatment of this theme also bears witness to his divergence from Bretonian surrealism. According to Jean, Breton's concept of 'amour fou' is based on the image of the night, which represents obscurity, disorientation and dissolution. The violence and disorder symbolised by the night and love reflect Breton's interest in situations in which the constraints of society are removed. Jean argues that by contrast, Éluard's conception of love has shades of Breton's dream-like 'amour fou', but is simultaneously more ordered and reasoned.⁹ Clive Scott notes a similarly ordered quality to Éluard's work, in contrast to the apparently arbitrary and often aggressive tone of Breton's texts.¹⁰ Such an analysis is supported by Éluard's own assertion, in 1937, that 'On ne prend pas le récit de rêve pour un poème'.¹¹ According to Jean, this implied rejection of the Unconscious and of chance is evident throughout Éluard's oeuvre, even during the 1920s when he was very closely allied to the surrealist movement.¹²

⁸ See, for example, Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism*, p. 168; and Anna Balakian, *Surrealism. The Road to the Absolute* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1986), pp. 219-25.

⁹ Jean, *La poétique du désir. Nerval, Lautréamont, Apollinaire, Éluard* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), pp. 381-82.

¹⁰ Clive Scott, 'Introduction', in Scott (ed.), *Anthologie Éluard* (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 1-44 (p. 7).

¹¹ Éluard, 'Premières vues anciennes', in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 550.

¹² Jean, *La poétique du désir*, p. 44.

The image of the eyes, usually those of a beloved, is central to Éluard's oeuvre. His poetry represents the act of seeing as a mode of communication and exchange. Éluard's admiration for Pablo Picasso's art, expressed repeatedly in his poetry and theoretical writings, exemplifies the significance of vision in his aesthetics. The definition of the verb 'voir' in Breton's and Éluard's *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* is taken from a passage by Éluard about Picasso's art:

Pour l'artiste, comme pour l'homme le plus inculte, il n'y a ni formes concrètes, ni formes abstraites. Il n'y a que communication entre ce qui voit et ce qui est vu, effort de compréhension, de relation – parfois de détermination, de création. Voir, c'est comprendre, juger, transformer, imaginer, oublier ou s'oublier, être ou disparaître.¹³

For Éluard (and, in Éluard's view, for Picasso) the act of seeing is infinitely more important than the object to be seen. In a formulation that Éluard also uses as the title of one of his publications, he attributes to Picasso 'le prestige de donner à voir'.¹⁴ The phrase 'donner à voir' means that the reader is rendered capable of perceiving reality in a new way, as a result of reading the surrealist poetry. Such an approach to art implies that there is no objective reality that may be perceived by all, but rather that any perception of reality is contingent on the moment of communication between the viewer and the object viewed: '[Picasso a], au mépris des notions admises du réel objectif, rétabli le contact entre l'objet et celui qui le voit et, par conséquent, le pense.'¹⁵ Éluard thus believes that Picasso shares his own view of artistic creation, namely that the world is not passively observed by the artist but is created by the exchange between the artist and the

¹³ Éluard, *Donner à voir* (1939), in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 943.

¹⁴ The final three lines of Éluard's poem 'A Pablo Picasso' read: 'Et sur les fondations des souvenirs présents / Sans ordre ni désordre avec simplicité / S'élève le prestige de donner à voir'. Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1001-03. One of Éluard's volumes of poetry and theoretical texts is entitled *Donner à voir* (1939).

¹⁵ Éluard, 'Je parle de ce qui est bien', in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 940.

world around him. This notion that complete, untrammelled access to reality may only be achieved through artistic endeavour is at the basis of Éluard's conception of permanent renewal.

This idea of exchange between the artist and the world is also present in the manifold allusions to mirrors and reflections throughout Éluard's poems. In one respect, these images support Éluard's concept of *ressemblance*, according to which images are compared and therefore presented as being interchangeable with one another.¹⁶ This resemblance is also attributed to the poems' addressee, such as in the phrase 'Tu es la ressemblance'.¹⁷ As Debreuille argues, the addressee here is not said to resemble a specific object, and so this line expresses the concept of universal resemblance.¹⁸ He links this universality to Éluard's notion that one woman may represent all women. Thus for Éluard, to love 'une femme' is equivalent to loving 'La Femme'.¹⁹ Jacques Gaucheron aligns this notion of universal womanhood with Breton's conception of 'amour fou', which aims for the expression of a unique love by collating into a single face all the faces of the women whom the poet has met.²⁰ This concept of the beloved representing others is central to Éluard's poetry. As well as in the glance in the mirror, exchange is achieved in Éluard's poems through the woman's gaze at the male speaker. Daniel Bergez argues that this

¹⁶ For a detailed analysis of the role of the mirror and reflection in Éluard's imagery, see Daniel Bergez, *Éluard ou le rayonnement de l'être* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1982), pp. 13-40.

¹⁷ In the first poem of Éluard's collection 'Facile', 'Tu te lèves l'eau se déplie', the final three lines read: 'Femme tu mets au monde un corps toujours pareil / Le tien // Tu es la ressemblance'. Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 459.

¹⁸ Debreuille, 'Aspects du discours amoureux dans la poésie d'Éluard', p. 62.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 67-68. Henri Meschonnic points out that this notion of universality does not suggest the Platonic concept of the invisible ideal woman indicated by the real woman. Rather, the beloved's 'ressemblance' links her to all other women, thus representing 'l'aventure humaine sans cesse renouvelée dans un seul corps.' Meschonnic, *Pour la poésie III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 128-29.

²⁰ See Jacques Gaucheron, *Paul Éluard ou La fidélité à la vie* (Toulouse: Le Temps des Cérises, 1995), p. 196, for a more detailed discussion of the role of the image of the face in Breton's and Éluard's conceptions of love.

gaze binds the speaker and addressee together, creating a double figure, as in Éluard's lines: 'Tes yeux dans lesquels nous dormons / Tous les deux'.²¹

'Ressemblance' thus has two complementary effects in Éluard's poetry. Firstly, it suggests an interchangeability that renders the images fluid, in that they are never able to rest in fixed relation to one another. Caws considers this notion of constant flux to be analogous to Breton's concept of permanent renewal.²² She highlights, for example, the phrase 'Être au commencement' at the end of Éluard's poem 'Réal' (1938).²³ Several other lines from Éluard's poems also reflect this sense of permanent renewal, such as: 'Je crée je t'ai créée je te transformerai' and 'Notre naissance est perpétuelle'. Henri Meschonnic notes that these phrases represent Éluard's identification of love as continual invention and infinite youth.²⁴ Secondly, 'ressemblance' indicates that one figure may represent or symbolise a multitude of other figures, introducing the images of doubles, shadows and reflections.

It is in the context of 'ressemblance' that a link can be established between Éluard's surrealism, his love poetry and his political poetry. Just as in the poetry the figure of the beloved is often expanded to represent the entire world, so Éluard's political poetry expounds a love for all humanity. Éluard's most famous poem, 'Liberté' (1942), and the volume *Au rendez-vous allemand* (1944) are explicit examples of this concern for political and social circumstances. Jean argues that this shift in Éluard's aesthetics occurred after Nusch Éluard's death in 1946, yet he also notes that as early as 1939 Éluard's political

²¹ Éluard, 'On ne peut me connaître', *Les Yeux Fertiles*, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 493. Cited in Bergez, p. 43.

²² Caws, pp. 138-44.

²³ Éluard, 'Réal', *Cours naturel*, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 806.

²⁴ Éluard, 'Je t'ai imaginée', *Corps memorable* (1948) and *Marc Chagall* (1947), in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 132 and 118. Cited in Meschonnic, p. 126.

conscience was inseparable from his poetic conscience.²⁵ Marie-Claire Dumas likewise contends that Éluard had recourse to collective activity as a way of dealing with his despair both at the death of Nusch Éluard and at the horrors of European fascism.²⁶ This turn towards the collective is most evident in the title of the first cycle of Éluard's collection *Poèmes politiques* (1948), 'De l'horizon d'un homme à l'horizon de tous'.²⁷ That Éluard considered this concern for the collective to be fully consonant with his conception of surrealism is suggested in his contribution to the definition of 'surrealism' in the *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*: 'Le surréalisme [...] travaille à mettre au jour la conscience profonde de l'homme, à réduire les différences qui existent entre les hommes.'²⁸ Thus, Éluard's political poems do not constitute a break in his aesthetics. Rather, these expressions of expansion from one to all are a re-application of the concepts of love and 'ressemblance' that are fundamental to his entire oeuvre.

2 Éluard's Poems from *Capitale de la douleur*

The poems from *Capitale de la douleur* translated by Celan include two whose titles refer to a surrealist artist, 'Pablo Picasso' and 'Georges Braque'.²⁹ They therefore appear to be poems of homage:

PABLO PICASSO

Les armes du sommeil ont creusé dans la nuit

Les sillons merveilleux qui séparent nos têtes.

A travers le diamant, toute médaille est fausse,

Sous le ciel éclatant, la terre est invisible.

²⁵ Jean, *Paul Éluard*, pp. 29-31.

²⁶ Dumas, 'Éluard et Desnos ou la distance complice', in Guedj, pp. 163-78 (p. 173).

²⁷ Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 204-16.

²⁸ Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, p. 780.

²⁹ The extent to which Pablo Picasso was indeed a surrealist artist is still a point of contention amongst art historians, although his 'surrealist period' is generally accepted to have extended from 1925 to 1937. See Ulrich Weisner (ed.), *Picasso's Surrealism: Werke 1925-1937* (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1991) for a critical survey of Picasso's supposed surrealist phase. Georges Braque (1882-1963) was a French painter and sculptor credited as developing the cubist style with Picasso.

Le visage du coeur a perdu ses couleurs
Et le soleil nous cherche et la neige est aveugle.
Si nous l'abandonnons, l'horizon a des ailes
Et nos regards au loin dissipent les erreurs.

GEORGES BRAQUE

Un oiseau s'envole,
Il rejette les nues comme un voile inutile,
Il n'a jamais craint la lumière,
Enfermé dans son vol
Il n'a jamais eu d'ombre.

Coquilles des moissons brisées par le soleil.
Toutes les feuilles dans les bois disent oui,
Elles ne savent dire que oui,
Toute question, toute réponse
Et la rosée coule au fond de ce oui.

Un homme aux yeux légers décrit le ciel d'amour.
Il en rassemble les merveilles
Comme des feuilles dans un bois,
Comme des oiseaux dans leurs ailes
Et des hommes dans le sommeil.

These poems concur in their interpretation of artistic creation as autonomous and liberating expression, free of the shackles of conventional modes of representation. The image of birds' wings, particularly common in Éluard's poetry in the 1920s, represents this liberation, by suggesting that the artists are lifting off from the fixed topography of convention. Moreover, the images of sleep, wonder and light suffuse the poems, thus reflecting key motifs from 1920s surrealism, as outlined in Chapter 1.

In 'Pablo Picasso', the evocation of vision reflects Éluard's preoccupation with that sense as a mode of perception and exchange. For example, the references to invisibility and to blindness (lines 4 and 6) may indicate that the speaker is blind to conventional reality and thus open to a new and creative vision. Moreover, the diamond (line 3) suggests an entirely new form of vision whereby the light is refracted through the multi-faceted stone to produce a fragmented, new and unique image, similar to Picasso's Cubist creations. By contrast, the 'médaille' ('medal' or 'coin') may represent conventional vision and artificial reproduction, since the image of a face on a medal or coin can be infinitely reproduced. Indeed, as symbols that denote something else (the medal indicates a victory or achievement; the coin represents a specific amount of gold), these objects are signifiers *par excellence*. Therefore, the phrase 'toute médaille est fausse' suggests both doubt regarding the reliability of signification and a rejection of representative or imitative art that is consonant with Éluard's concern with new creation. The poem 'Georges Braque' further evokes a surrealist atmosphere in the line 'Toute question, toute réponse', recalling the surrealist game 'Question-Réponse'.³⁰ In this game, one member posed a question, to which another replied so quickly that the answer invariably appeared to be nonsensical.

'Georges Braque' celebrates light, such as at the end of the first stanza, 'Il n'a jamais eu d'ombre'. By contrast, the two other poems selected by Celan for translation are concerned almost exclusively with shade and darkness:

ENTRE AUTRES

A l'ombre des arbres

³⁰ See Jean-Charles Gateau, *Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste* (Geneva: Droz, 1982) for detailed readings of: 'Pablo Picasso', pp. 122-24; and 'Georges Braque', pp. 145-47.

Comme au temps des miracles,

Au milieu des hommes

Comme la plus belle femme,

Sans regrets, sans honte,

J'ai quitté le monde.

– Qu'avez vous vu?

– Une femme jeune, grande et belle

En robe noire très décolletée.

LA NUIT

Caresse l'horizon de la nuit, cherche le coeur de jais que l'aube recouvre de chair.

Il mettrait dans tes yeux des pensées innocentes, des flammes, des ailes et des
verdures que le soleil n'inventa pas.

Ce n'est pas la nuit qui te manque, mais sa puissance.

In 'Entre autres' the speaker is in the shade of a tree when he is depicted as leaving the world. The following three lines suggest that this departure represents a move away from conventional reality and into surreality. In this vein, the question-answer form of these lines also reflects the surrealist 'Question-Réponse' format. The young, tall, beautiful woman is reminiscent of the idealised surrealist beloved; and her black, low-cut dress is symbolic of the eroticised realm of night that is central to the surrealist aesthetic.

The poem 'La nuit' reflects more explicitly this preoccupation with the night, describing an apparently surrealist perception of reality. The poet demands that the reader seek darkness (represented by the heart of jet, the blackest of minerals), in order to be able to move beyond convention. However, the reference to jet takes the image beyond the mere darkness associated with the night. Firstly, jet evokes death, as it is the gemstone

most commonly associated with funerary jewels of mourning; and secondly, as a carbon compound, formed of compressed ancient driftwood, it simultaneously suggests the preservation of living beings.³¹ In addition, the evocation of ‘verdures que le soleil n’inventa pas’ implies that the reader who engages with this other side of reality will be able to perceive elements that appear to be natural and yet are entirely new and unknown. The isolated line at the end of the poem, ‘Ce n’est pas la nuit qui te manque, mais sa puissance’, functions as a final instruction to the reader of how to achieve this perception of surreality. It seems that it is not enough to perceive the night *per se*, but rather to become aware of the power of the night as the realm in which conventional perception may be overcome.

Within *Capitale de la douleur* there is a discrete cycle of eleven poems, entitled ‘Les Petits justes’, which Celan also translated.³² These short poems initially appear to resist any collective description or evaluation, since they differ greatly from one another in terms of imagery.³³ However, within this variation certain leitmotifs do emerge, such as laughter, images of disruption and dislocation, the speaker’s dependence on the addressee or beloved, and poetological concerns.³⁴ The first poem in the cycle presents laughter as a positive and all-encompassing force, which creates a new reality defined by plenitude:

Sur la maison du rire
Un oiseau rit dans ses ailes.
Le monde est si léger
Qu’il n’est plus à sa place

³¹ See ‘Jet’, in *The Encyclopedia of Gemstones and Minerals*, ed. by Martin Holden (New York and Oxford: Friedman, 1991), p. 149.

³² Éluard, ‘Les Petits justes’, in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 151-152 and 173-74. For Celan’s versions see Guțu, ‘Frühe Übersetzungen’, pp. 43-44.

³³ This variation may result in part from the fact that they were conceived by Éluard separately: Poems I to V and XI were published in *Mourir de ne pas mourir* in 1924, and then reprinted two years later, with the addition of poems VI to X, in *Capitale de la douleur*.

³⁴ ‘Les Petits justes’ is printed in full in the appendices.

Et si gai
Qu'il ne lui manque rien.

However, by poem V the positive associations of laughter are more ambivalent. This poem reads:

A faire rire la certaine,
Était-elle en pierre?
Elle s'effondra.

The lightness of the first poem is still present in the suggestion that the monolithic inflexibility of 'la certaine' may be overcome by laughter. Yet the positive connotations of the laughter are compromised by the association with collapse, so that the shaking of laughter is elided with the attendant implications of unsteadiness and fragility. As 'Les Petits justes' continues, this progression away from a view of laughter as indicative of levity increases, so that by poem VIII laughter is presented as a disguise for negative emotions: 'Elle rit pour cacher sa terreur d'elle-même.'

The impression of dislocation and rupture that increases throughout the cycle is most striking in poem VIII. Here, the final three lines depict an absent presence:

Et partout où elle a passé
Elle a laissé
L'empreinte des choses brisées.

It is not the 'things' that are depicted, nor even broken things, but the trace or imprint of those 'choses brisées'. So the absence of these objects is only evident through the trace of their past presence. Jean-Charles Gateau identifies a similar 'présence-absence' in poem X:

Inconnue, elle était ma forme préférée,
 Celle qui m'enlevait le souci d'être un homme,
 Et je la vois et je la perds et je subis
 Ma douleur, comme un peu de soleil dans l'eau froide.³⁵

The suggestion of a tangible figure, 'ma forme préférée', is relegated to an undefined past and remains resolutely undefined itself: 'Inconnue'. Meanwhile, the present tense is reserved for the unsettling simultaneity of presence and absence, in that the speaker both sees her and loses her at the same time ('Et je la vois et je la perds'). The threat implied by the beloved's absent presence parallels that in poem III, in which the speaker's identity is intertwined with the gaze of the beloved: 'Avec tes yeux je change comme avec les lunes'. In this respect, the potential absence of the beloved in the later poems becomes more threatening, as it implies the attendant absence of the speaker himself.

One of the most striking features of 'Les Petits justes' is the ending of the final poem (XI), which fades away with an ellipsis:

Les hommes qui changent et se ressemblent
 Ont, au cours de leurs jours, toujours fermé les yeux
 Pour dissiper la brume de la dérision
 Etc...³⁶

This ellipsis implies an open ending to which only the reader is now in a position to respond, thus establishing a co-operation between the poet and the reader. The poet appears to be divesting himself of responsibility for the continuation of the poem, and so inviting the reader to complete it. This practice is entirely in keeping with the tendency of

³⁵ Gateau, *Capitale de la douleur de Paul Éluard* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 98-99. Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 174.

³⁶ Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 152.

the surrealists to collaborate in their art works. It also indicates a link to Celan's translations of these poems by Éluard. For by translating these poems, it could be said that Celan is responding to Éluard's 'Etc...' in the way that is elicited by the final ellipsis.

3 Celan's Translations

Éluard's poems 'Pablo Picasso' and 'Georges Braque' are celebrations of the works of artists for whom the poet had a high regard. By selecting these particular poems for translation, Celan performs a double homage: both to Éluard the poet and to his artist subjects. The homage to Éluard, to which Celan attests in his letter to Juin of 1962, cited above, is demonstrated by his replication of the original poems' complex style. Moreover, the poems selected by Celan for translation are largely concerned with perception (usually in the form of vision) and convention, which in turn are the issues with which Celan engages in his surrealist-influenced essay 'Edgar Jené', written in 1948 shortly after he had left Bucharest. As such, these versions of Éluard's poems display the specific grounding and orientation of Celan's surrealism. Nonetheless, the following analyses also show that these translations cannot be understood solely as an act of homage to Éluard. For alongside this evidence of commitment to the more typically surrealist elements of the original poems, haunting traces of a dark past emerge in the translations.

(a) Homage

The syntactical inversions in Celan's translations tend to reproduce or even increase the self-consciously poetic nature of Éluard's imagery. For example, the phrase 'Toutes les feuilles dans les bois disent oui', in 'Georges Braque', is translated using a preceding genitive phrase: 'Es sagen aller Wälder Blätter Ja'. A similar moment occurs in Celan's translation of 'Entre autres', where 'Comme la plus belle femme' is translated as 'Als wie der Frauen schönste'. Such formulations render the line more consciously poetic and stylised, removing it from the realms of everyday language. The effect of these complex

phrases in the German versions is two-fold. They both reproduce the multivalent and evocative nature of the imagery in Éluard's poems, thereby functioning as replications of the original style; and they increase the complexity of Éluard's otherwise accessible imagery. In the case of 'Georges Braque', this latter effect is particularly pertinent, since the simplicity and openness of the imagery in that poem reflects Éluard's view of Braque's art. By contrast, the syntax is more complex in Celan's version, which implies a more difficult relationship between language and the subject of expression.

Indeed, Celan's draft translation of 'Georges Braque' was less complex than the final version. The parallelism of the final stanza of the French version, in which consecutive lines begin with 'comme', evokes a repetition that is nevertheless difficult to define, since it is not evident what the leaves, birds and sleeping men have in common:

Comme des feuilles dans un bois,
Comme des oiseaux dans leurs ailes
Et des hommes dans le sommeil.

The French stanza thus simultaneously invites and obfuscates potential parallels between the images. By contrast, Celan's draft translation of the final stanza reads:

Wie du Laub häufst im Wald
Wie der Vogel Blätter häuft in den Schwingen
Wie die Menschen Blätter häufen in ihrem Schlaf.³⁷

Here, Celan has repeated the verb 'häufen' three times and used the second person pronoun 'du', thus inserting an agency that is not present in the original French. The uncertainty brought about by the repetition of 'comme' in the original, in that the stated

³⁷ Romanian Literary Museum: 25006 – 7/14.

link between these images is not self-evident, is clarified in Celan's version by the repetition of the image of gathering leaves. Indeed, the repetition of that image in the third line of the stanza, 'Wie die Menschen Blätter häufen in ihrem Schlaf' renders more immediate the potential poetological meaning of the elliptical French line, 'Et des hommes dans le sommeil', for it renders more compelling the transfer of the meaning of 'feuilles' / 'Blätter' from leaves to sheets of paper. So the surrealist image of writing in one's sleep becomes more immediate.

However, Celan alters his translation of this stanza, reverting to a formula that is more similar to the French syntax:

Wie Laub im Walde sich häuft
Wie die Vögel sich zusammentun unter den Schwingen
Wie die Menschen im Schlaf.³⁸

The omission of the descriptions of leaves being piled up in each of the lines of this stanza changes the image substantially. The verb for the final phrase, 'Wie die Menschen im Schlaf', is provided in the second line ('häuft'), so that the final image has been transformed from one of piling up leaves (or sheets of paper), in Celan's draft version, to that of people becoming entwined with one another in their sleep. Celan's versions have thus shifted from a vision of sleep-writing to an erotic image, both of which can be aligned with Éluard's surrealist imagery. However, the latter version, which compares the sleeping people to the birds, presents a more precise and defined image. The process that is evident in these drafts of Celan's translation, away from Celan's initial free translation and towards a version that is more lexically and syntactically faithful to the original, is in

³⁸ Guțu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 45.

itself remarkable since the drafts of Celan's translations from the mid-1950s onwards show a movement in the opposite direction.³⁹

In his version of 'Pablo Picasso', Celan inserts an addressee and makes some syntactical changes that render the surrealist aspects of the imagery more accessible. For example, line 3 of Éluard's poem reads: 'A travers le diamant, toute médaille est fausse'. Celan's translates this as: 'Blickst du durch den Demanten, ist alle Münze falsch'.⁴⁰ The insertion of the verb 'blicken' and of the addressee renders the image more personal and immediate. Éluard's ambiguous image is thus reduced to a single idea, that of the refraction of light through a diamond and the resulting altered vision. As such, Celan's phrase reads as an explanation of the surrealist conception of vision: if one looks through the diamond (that is, allowing your conventional perception to be altered), then one will realise that all attempts to reproduce reality (the 'médailles' or 'Münzen') are inadequate. The celebration of the refraction of light represented by the diamond, which itself suggests Picasso's cubist creations, is thus emphasised in Celan's version, and his homage both to Éluard and to Picasso is thereby brought to the fore. Moreover, the translation of 'médaille' as 'Münze' reduces the meaning of the multivalent French term to that of currency. As such, the rejection of an equation between artistic value and monetary value, which is one of the undertones of Éluard's poem, is rendered more compelling.

(b) Celan's Interventions

Celan's rendering of nouns and pronouns in his versions of Éluard's poems tends to increase the general and universal references of the poems. This shift of emphasis occurs twice in his translation of 'Les Petits justes' ('Die kleinen Gerechten'), in the versions of

³⁹ For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, the first drafts of Celan's translation of Éluard's poem 'Nous avons fait la nuit' are lexically and syntactically much closer to the original than the final version.

⁴⁰ Guþu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 44.

poems VIII and X. The nouns 'terreur' and 'douleur' in the original versions of these poems are both linked to the subject by a possessive pronoun: 'sa terreur' and 'ma douleur'. By contrast, in the German version the definite article is used instead: 'den Schrecken' and 'den Schmerz'. Coupled with this generalising tendency is the rendering of 'homme' as 'Mensch' in the latter poem. The ambiguity that is contained in the French word 'homme', in that it can mean both 'man' and 'person', is not possible in the German language. Celan's handwritten drafts of poem X suggest that he considered this issue, since he wrote the word 'Mann' in the margin next to this line. By using the term 'Mensch', the German version is distanced from the suggestion of a love relationship, as in Éluard's poem. Rather, the impression is of an existential issue, of humanity rather than of masculinity. The impression thus gained, through the general 'Schrecken' and 'Schmerz' and the noun 'Mensch', is that the poem is hinting at some specific and yet universal horror and pain, which goes beyond the bounds of the individual.

These intimations of a universal suffering are accompanied by a shift in emphasis from the present to the past. Éluard's poems tend to use the present tense, creating an impression of immediacy and presence. By contrast, several of Celan's translations shift some of the verbs into the past tense, suggesting a rupture between the past and the present. This temporal dislocation is perhaps most evident in the first poem of 'Les Petits justes', 'Sur la maison du rire'. The light-hearted optimism of this poem is tempered in Celan's version:

Überm Haus des Lachens
 Lacht ins Gefieder ein Vogel.
 So leicht ist die Welt,
 Daß sie nicht mehr ist wo sie war,
 So fröhlich

Daß nichts mehr ihr fehlt.

The repetition of 'mehr' in lines 4 and 6, and the juxtaposition of the present and past tenses in line 4 ('ist' / 'war'), evokes a past realm that is entirely absent from the original poem. The impression given by Celan's version is that something about the world has unalterably changed, and despite the assertion that the world is 'fröhlich', this undefined past haunts the poem.

Similarly, past and present are juxtaposed in the first two lines of 'Georges Braque':

Un oiseau s'envole, / Il rejette les nues comme un voile inutile,

Ein Vogel flog auf / Er streift die Wolken ab ein unnütz Schleiertuch⁴¹

The consistent present tense in Éluard's poem, creating an immediate and tangible image, is replaced by the clashing of past and present in Celan's version. This temporal instability continues throughout the first stanza, as Éluard's three lines in the present perfect tense are rendered in the archaic past, the imperfect and the present respectively:

Nie ward ihm Angst vorm Licht,
Er schloß sich ein in seinen Flug
So hat er niemals Schatten.

Éluard's unified image of the bird is thus dismantled by Celan and scattered across different planes of time.

⁴¹ Guşu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 44. Celan's draft reveals that he originally translated the verb 's'envole' as 'fliegt', but then replaced it with 'flog'. Romanian Literary Museum: 25006 – 7/14.

An internal shift from the present to the past is also evident in Celan's version of Éluard's poem 'La nuit':

Liebkose den Horizont der Nacht, suche das Herz aus
schwarzem Bernstein, das um die Morgenröte einen
fleischfarbenen Mantel schlägt. So füllte es die Augen
mit unschuldigen Gedanken, Feuern, Flügeln
und Grün die die Sonne nicht erfand.
Nicht die Nacht ist die dir fehlt, es ist ihre Gewalt.⁴²

The evocation of jet ('le couleur de jais') in Éluard's poem is rendered as black amber in the German version. This change transforms the image from a conventional organic and poetic element (jet is generally black and the phrase 'noir comme du jais' is a commonly used simile) to an unnatural and alienating vision, for amber can be a variety of colours but is never black. Moreover, the image of amber intensifies the impression of memory suggested by the jet in Éluard's poem. As noted above, jet implies both the preservation of living beings, through the fossilisation of carbon, and mourning. Amber, as fossilised tree resin, often contains the fossil casts of leaves or insects, so representing a more pronounced form of memory.⁴³ As such, the heart of Celan's version is rendered black with memory: 'das Herz aus / schwarzem Bernstein'.

This shift towards darkness is intensified by the reworking of the dawn image:

le coeur [...] que l'aube recouvre de chair.

das Herz [...], das um die Morgenröte einen fleischfarbenen Mantel schlägt.

⁴² Guţu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 45.

⁴³ See 'Amber' in *The Encyclopedia of Gemstones and Minerals*, ed. by Martin Holden (New York and Oxford: Friedman, 1991), pp. 14-15.

Celan's intervention here is by far the most aggressive of all of these translations of Éluard's poems. The status of the heart is changed from the object to the subject of the sentence. Rather than the heart being covered with flesh by the dawn, the heart covers the dawn with a flesh-coloured cloak.⁴⁴ Moreover, the introduction of the verb 'schlagen' emphasises the heart's agency by indicating its beating; yet this term also inserts an impression of violence into the sentence. While Éluard's poem indicates a new vitality, with a heart being covered in flesh, Celan's poem evokes beating, and reduces the flesh to a mere flesh-coloured cloak. The vitality is thus reduced to an imitation of life, and the cloak may even appear to be smothering the dawn. Further, the combination of the violence inherent in the verb 'schlagen' and the image of a flesh-coloured cloak intimates the act of flaying.

The first line of Celan's version of 'Pablo Picasso' has similarly ominous undertones:

Les armes du sommeil ont creusé dans la nuit

Des Schlafes Waffen ziehen durch die Nacht⁴⁵

The use of the verb 'ziehen', instead of a more direct translation of 'creuser' ('graben'), distances the image from one of digging and instead intensifies the military tone implied by Éluard's image of weapons. It combines with the 'Waffen' to hint at an image of soldiers marching through the night. Celan's reconfiguration of the syntax, to create the phrase 'Waffen ziehen durch die Nacht', further invites this reading, and the replacement

⁴⁴ The draft of this translation shows that this rendering does not merely represent a mere miscomprehension on Celan's part, since he first wrote and then crossed out: 'das Herz aus schwarzem Bernstein das die Morgenröte mit Fleisch überzieht.' Romanian Literary Museum: 25006 – 7/10.

⁴⁵ Guțu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 44.

of the French present perfect tense with the German present increases the immediacy of the image, so that it appears to unfold before the reader's eyes.

A temporal shift also occurs in line six:

Et le soleil nous cherche et la neige est aveugle.

Uns sucht die Sonne und der Schnee ward blind.⁴⁶

In Éluard's poem, the blindness of the snow recalls the phrase from line 4, 'la terre est invisible', and reflects Éluard's celebration of surreality as the invisible side of reality. Yet by shifting the tense in the second half of this line, Celan breaks the link both to line 4 and to the image of the sun. Instead, the snow is transferred into a separate, definitively past realm. This distancing of the image of the snow is consonant with the significance of this image in Celan's poetic universe at this stage, as is evident in the near-contemporary poem 'Schwarze Flocken' (1944; III, 25), where the death of a father is aligned with snow imagery.⁴⁷ So the shift in tense in this line, from the present to the past, hints at an undefined yet traumatic moment in the past; and the archaic verb form 'ward' renders that past yet more distant and ominous. In the context of Celan's own poetry of this period, that past may take on the more specific identity of the Holocaust.

⁴⁶ Guțu's transcription of this poem notes this line as: 'Uns sucht die Sonne und der Schnee wird blind'. Guțu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 44. However, the manuscript shows clearly that the verb form is 'ward'. Romanian Literary Museum: 25006 – 7/14 (reverse side). This form seems to be confirmed by Celan's typescript of his translation of this poem, held in the DLA in Marbach, in which the line also reads: 'Uns sucht die Sonne und der Schnee ward blind'. DLA: AA/2.2, 48, D 90.1.7.

⁴⁷ Celan's parents died in the winter of 1942-43 and Celan appears to have identified wintry weather with their death, cf. his early poems 'Winter' (1944; VI, 68) and 'Schwarze Flocken'. See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 16-21, for details of what is thought to be the biographical background to these poems.

That the Holocaust may figure for a reader of Celan's translations of Éluard's poems is suggested by the German version of poem VI of 'Les Petits justes'. In Éluard's poem the image of a wall of tears is evoked, in a poem that resonates with violence:

Le monstre de la fuite hume même les plumes
De cet oiseau roussi par le feu du fusil.
Sa plainte vibre tout le long d'un mur de larmes
Et les ciseaux des yeux coupent la mélodie
Qui bourgeonnait déjà dans le coeur du chasseur.

Celan's translation reads:

Das Ungetüm der Flucht es wittert das Gefieder
Selbst dieses Vogels den ein Flintenschuß versengt.
Sein Klagelaut bebt hin entlang der Tränenmauer,
Die Schere seiner Augen schneidet nun entzwei
Das Lied das schon geknospt im Herzen seines Jägers.

In the German version, the definite article in line 3 transforms the image of *a* wall of tears into *the* wall of tears, suggesting a specific point of reference. One image that may be evoked as a result of this specificity is the so-called Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Indeed, the German name 'Klagemauer' appears embedded in this line, through the terms 'Klagelaut' and 'Tränenmauer'.⁴⁸ Thus a specifically Jewish suffering is suggested, which indicates Celan's status as a Holocaust survivor in the immediate post-war years.

⁴⁸ The name 'Wailing Wall' ('Klagemauer') denotes the remaining section of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, part of the Second Temple that was destroyed in 70 CE in the Jewish-Roman war. The term is thought to refer to the fact that the Western Wall became a focal point for Jews to pray and to mourn the destruction of the Second Temple. After the Six Day War in 1967, as a result of which control of the whole of Jerusalem was taken by Israel, the use of the negatively charged phrase 'Wailing Wall' diminished, until it is barely used today by either Jews or non-Jews. Nevertheless, when Celan translated this poem, in the mid-1940s, the term 'Klagemauer' would have resonated with images of Judaism, both in terms of Jewish suffering in the form of the destruction of the Second Temple, and of Jewish devotion, since the Western Wall is one of the holiest sites for Jews.

This version of Éluard's poem thus resounds with these new connotations, suggesting that the poem has been transported into a new context through its translation. This apparently specific reference is only one possible reading of the German poem, arising from the version's post-Holocaust context. However, such a reading is rendered compelling by the presence of such evocative images in these versions in which the relationship between the past and the present appears to be ruptured. As a result of this rupture, the spectre of an undefined yet threatening past haunts the poem.

4 Conclusion

Celan's translations of Éluard's poems, written while he was involved with surrealist poets in Bucharest, bears witness to this commitment to the surrealist group. In particular, his selection of poems about the artists Picasso and Braque reflects the surrealist tendency to pay homage to one another through collaboration and allusion. One of the ways in which Celan showed his surrealist credentials during his time in Bucharest was by joining in surrealist games, such as 'Question-Réponse', attested to by Celan's friend Petre Solomon.⁴⁹ The prevalence of this question-answer style in the poems by Éluard that Celan translated, from the dialogue in 'Entre autres' to the line 'Toute question, toute réponse' in 'Georges Braque', thereby functions as a commentary on Celan's aesthetic interests during the late 1940s. This format, as well as other elements that may be considered to be typical of 1920s surrealism, such as the celebration of light and of the night, render these translations an anthology of some of Éluard's more typically surrealist poems. Thus Celan's retrospective assessment of these translations in

See 'Temple', pp. 911-12, and 'Western (or Wailing) Wall', p. 965, in *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey Wigoder, 7th edn (New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1992).

⁴⁹ In his account of his friendship with Celan in Bucharest, Petre Solomon notes the particular appeal of the 'Question-Réponse' format for Celan, and cites some of the texts created by such games involving Celan. This claim is borne out by Celan's mention of 'Question-Réponse' in a letter to Solomon from Vienna on 12 March 1948. Solomon, 'Paul Celans Bukarester Aufenthalt', *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 21/iii (1982), 220-26 (pp. 223 and pp. 225-26).

1962, as his act of homage to Éluard, relate to Éluard as a specifically surrealist poet, and so bear witness to Celan's commitment to these aesthetics during the mid to late forties. Moreover, the overarching themes of perception and convention in the poems translated by Celan anticipate his prose text 'Edgar Jené', discussed in the next chapter, so reflecting the particular nature of Celan's engagement with surrealist theory.

However, these translations can also be viewed as recontextualisations in the light of the translator's particular situation. The increased complexity of the syntax in several of the German versions, as well as the confusion of time levels, suggests a rupture between the poet's language and the object of expression, as well as between the past and the present. These factors indicate that, while Celan's intention may indeed have been homage on one level, these poems have simultaneously undergone a recontextualisation that produces further implications.

This new context is evident principally in Celan's anthologising of Éluard's poems. The collection of manuscripts of Celan's translations constitutes an anthology of Éluard's poetry, juxtaposing these selected poems and so inviting comparisons and parallels to be drawn between them and between Éluard's poems and Celan's oeuvre. At the end of Celan's versions of 'Les Petits justes', this anthologising is rendered explicit. As discussed above, by ending poem XI with the word 'Etc...', Éluard is inviting his reader to complete the unfinished poem. Celan translates this term as 'Und manches andre', which parallels 'Auch manches andre', his translation of the title of Éluard's poem 'Entre autres'.⁵⁰ A connection between 'Les Petits justes' and 'Entre autres' is thus suggested, where there is none in the original poems. The poems are thereby presented not as discrete versions, but as a new, coherent collection. Moreover, Celan's translations

⁵⁰ Guțu, 'Frühe Übersetzungen', p. 44.

appear to perform precisely what Éluard may be inviting with his ellipsis: the continuation of the poem in a new context and by a new reader.

A new context is further introduced through the haunting intimations of a dark past that punctuate these new versions. Although mere undercurrents at this stage, they suggest the processes at work in Celan's translations, and hint at what is to come. Moreover, this re-creation of the poems as texts that hint at past memories, in particular the destruction and suffering of war, represent an updating of the poems in line with the developments that surrealist aesthetics themselves underwent between the time when Éluard wrote *Capitale de la douleur* and Celan's translation of these poems. As outlined in the previous chapter, surrealist writings during the 1930s and 40s showed an increasing awareness of the destruction inherent in external reality, and this awareness was particularly acute among the surrealist writers in Bucharest, owing to their direct experience of fascist aggression and occupation. The new undertones in Celan's versions of Éluard's poems thus reflect Celan's own concerns, while also representing his translations as a process of updating that mirrors the development of Éluard's poetics and of surrealist aesthetics themselves.

Such an evaluation of Celan's translations suggests that the existing view that Celan's poetics diverge from surrealism because of the insistent memory of the Holocaust does not do justice to the complexity of the relationship between Celan's poetics and surrealism. Rather, it appears that the dialectical structure of surrealist texts is reformulated in Celan's versions into a tension between past destruction and present creativity. Such a communication between past and present is conceptualised in Celan's treatise 'Edgar Jené', written after Celan had left Bucharest but while he was still closely involved with surrealist artists and poets. The following chapter demonstrates how in

that essay Celan reconciles surrealist theory and the inscription of memories of the Holocaust in language, so representing a unique conjunction of surrealism with the idea of post-war linguistic violation.

Chapter 4

Communicating Vessels: 'Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume'

When Celan arrived in Vienna from Bucharest in December 1947, he brought with him a letter of introduction from his Romanian friend and mentor, the poet Alfred Margul-Sperber, to Otto Basil, poet and editor of the avant-garde literary journal *Plan*. As outlined in Chapter 1, *Plan* was oriented towards French surrealism, and it was through Basil that Celan became involved in the surrealist movement in Vienna. Celan consequently became closely associated with Edgar Jené throughout his few months in Vienna, as his letter to Margul-Sperber in February 1948 testifies: 'Er [Jené] ist hier sozusagen der "Papst" des Surrealismus und ich bin sein einflußreichster (einziger) Kardinal'.¹ Celan's collaboration with the Viennese surrealists took four principal forms: he participated in the first surrealist exhibition in Vienna, in March 1948; he composed a prose text with Jené, entitled 'Eine Lanze' (1948); he wrote an introduction to a publication of Jené's lithographs ('Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume' (1948))²; and he prepared translations of French surrealist poems for a proposed surrealist issue of *Plan*.³

¹ Letter from Paul Celan to Alfred Margul-Sperber, 11 February 1948. However, the letter goes on to suggest that Celan perceived a difference between the Viennese surrealists and the orthodox French surrealists represented by Breton: 'Allerdings hab ich ihm [Jené] prophezeit, daß sein Vorgesetzter, der Heilige Petrus also, André Breton, ihn als Statthalter in Wien bestimmt nicht anerkennen wird und schon garnicht mich, der ich doch so Verwerfliches wie Reime gemacht habe.' Cited in Bugs, p. 76.

² Celan, 'Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume', in Paul Celan, Edgar Jené – Der Traum vom Traume. Mit 30 Abbildungen und einer Vorbemerkung von Otto Basil (Vienna: Agathon, 1948), pp. 7-12.

³ For more details on Celan's stay in Vienna, see Glenn, 'Paul Celan in Wien', in *Die Pestsäule* (1977), pp. 100-08; Felstiner, pp. 61-68; Otto Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug* (Munich: Fink, 2000); Peter Goßens and Marcus G. Patka (eds), *'Displaced'. Paul Celan in Wien 1947/1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001); and Olschner, 'Das zu Erreichende hieß Wien. Die verfehlte Ankunft Paul Celans',

Although the surrealist issue of *Plan* never came to fruition, due to the journal's financial difficulties, the translations completed by Celan for this project did appear in a volume edited by Jené and Max Hölzer (co-editor of *Plan*), entitled *Surrealistische Publikationen* (1950).⁴ These translations, which were published after Celan had emigrated from Vienna to Paris, are analysed in Chapter 5. Celan's introduction to Jené's lithographs was published while he was still in Vienna and is of great significance for an understanding of Celan's poetics in the late 1940s, in particular with regard to his relationship to surrealist aesthetics. The essay is by no means limited to a consideration of the specific lithographs. On the contrary, Celan's analyses of these works take a secondary position in the treatise, which is conceived as a reflection on the experience of viewing Jené's art and is dominated by a theoretical discussion of the nature of perception and expression.

'Edgar Jené' constitutes Celan's only explicit theoretical engagement with surrealist art and theory to be published during his lifetime, and as a result it is frequently discussed by scholars reflecting on the relationship between Celan's poetics and surrealist aesthetics.⁵ As demonstrated by the survey in the second part of this chapter of readings to date of 'Edgar Jené', these critical responses tend to compare Celan's theories to a monolithic surrealist aesthetic, invariably based on Breton's first manifesto. However, such a

in *Kontinuitäten und Brüche. Österreichs literarischer Wiederaufbau nach 1945*, ed. by Heide Kunzelmann, Martin Liebscher and Thomas Eicher (Oberhausen: Athena, 2006), pp. 129-42.

⁴ Edgar Jené and Max Hölzer (eds), *Surrealistische Publikationen* (Klagenfurt: Haid, 1950).

⁵ Böschstein-Schäfer, 'Allegorische Züge in der Dichtung Paul Celans', *Études Germaniques*, 25 (1970), 251-64; Georg Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans* (1977); Pretzer, Pöggeler, *Die Frage nach der Kunst. Von Hegel zu Heidegger* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1984); Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl, *Poetik im Lichte der Utopie: Paul Celans poetologische Texte* (Bern: Lang, 1986); Colin, *Paul Celan. Holograms of Darkness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Könniker, pp. 84-88; Jean Firges, *Den Acheron durchquert ich: Einführung in die Lyrik Paul Celans* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998); Jean-Marie Valentin, 'Une rencontre oubliée: Paul Celan et le peintre Edgar Jené', *Études Germaniques*, 55/iii: *Paul Celan* (2000), 381-88; Ivanović, 'Eine Sprache der Bilder. Notizen zur immanenten Poetik der Lyrik Paul Celans', *Études Germaniques*, 55/iii: *Paul Celan* (2000), 541-59; Ivanović, 'Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus'; Bugs, pp. 71-79; and Pennone, pp. 99-104. Samuels's monograph oddly contains only a passing reference to this key text in Celan's relationship to surrealist aesthetics.

definition of surrealism does not reflect the diversity of French surrealist aesthetics. By contrast therefore, in this chapter I show that 'Edgar Jené' bears similarities to one particular text by Breton, his essay entitled *Les Vases communicants* (1932). In this text, Breton re-defined surrealism after the movement's initial association with automatic writing had proved inadequate. His new definition focuses on a perception of the interrelationship of dream and reality, such that dream is not accepted unreflectively, but is examined in order to assess its relationship to external reality. So Breton places external reality on an equal footing with dream and imagination. Since the view of surrealism among Celan scholars tends to regard that movement as detached from external, historical reality, *Les Vases communicants* challenges this understanding and so engenders a new assessment of the relationship between Celan's poetics and surrealist aesthetics.

Although there exists no documentary evidence that Celan read *Les Vases communicants*, it is possible that he would have read this seminal surrealist text while he was involved with the surrealist group in Vienna. According to Viennese artists Ernst Fuchs and Wolfgang Hutter, Jené's library consisted of almost all the pre-war publications of the Parisian surrealists, and these volumes were made available for his acquaintances to read.⁶ It is therefore likely that Celan would have had access to these texts, and so to *Les Vases communicants*. Axel Gellhaus has written of Celan's 'imaginäre Bibliothek', noting that Celan's library, now in the DLA in Marbach, by no means contains all the books that Celan read. Therefore one cannot conclude that, because a particular text is not in Celan's existing library, it is not significant for his oeuvre. By comparing the theories expounded in 'Edgar Jené' to those in *Les Vases communicants*, this chapter argues that

⁶ Georg-W. Koltzsch, *Schön ist nur das Wunderbare. Leben, Werke, Begegnungen des Malers Edgar Jené* (Saarbrücken: Die Mitte, 1984), pp. 48-50.

Breton's essay may be considered to be one constituent of Celan's so-called imaginary library.⁷

This chapter begins with an analysis of *Les Vases communicants*, in order to establish the parameters for a comparison of that text with 'Edgar Jené', in particular in view of Breton's assessment of Sigmund Freud's dream theories. This analysis is followed by an exposition of the parallels between the theories of 'Edgar Jené' and of *Les Vases communicants*. This comparison contributes to a new reading of Celan's essay, not as a rejection of surrealism, as several critics have argued, but rather as a refutation of Freud's theory of the relationship between the Conscious and Unconscious as it is presented by Breton. I show that Celan's approach to the Unconscious parallels Breton's treatment of Freud's theories in *Les Vases communicants*. Since the focus of this discussion is on the similarities between the representation of psychoanalytical theory in *Les Vases communicants* and 'Edgar Jené', Breton's portrayal of Freud's theories will be the principal source.

In the final section, I demonstrate that the tension between conscious and unconscious realms that is propagated in 'Edgar Jené' parallels a further intellectual debate of the immediate post-war period, namely the notion that the German language had been damaged by its use during the Nazi period. Contrary to the majority of critical responses to 'Edgar Jené', which assert that Celan's manifest concern with this violation of language distances that text from surrealist aesthetics, I argue that the surrealist concept of the communicating vessels is in fact reconciled in Celan's essay with that of linguistic violation. This investigation thus shows that Celan's concern with external reality and its

⁷ Gellhaus, 'Marginalien. Paul Celan als Leser', in Christoph Jamme and Pöggeler (eds), *Der glühende Leertext: Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung* (Munich: Fink, 1993), pp. 41-65 (p. 41).

impact on linguistic expression does not constitute a disavowal of surrealist theory. Rather, the similarities between Celan's view of language and the surrealist notion of unconscious impulses suggest that in 'Edgar Jené', through engagement with surrealist art and theories, Celan constructs his own concept of a linguistic Unconscious.

1 André Breton, *Les Vases communicants*

Breton's essay *Les Vases communicants* is one of the principal texts to document the relationship between his theories and those of Freud, since it draws on Freud's method of dream interpretation (as detailed principally in *Die Traumdeutung* (1900)) while simultaneously taking issue with some of Freud's apparent conclusions in that text.⁸ However, the conclusions that Breton attributes to Freud are often based on quotations from Freud's works taken out of context, or on incomplete readings of those works.⁹ Nevertheless, as several scholars of surrealism have argued, the accuracy of Breton's representations of Freud's theories is less significant for an understanding of surrealism than the representations themselves. For Breton's engagement with what he perceived to be Freud's theories highlights the contours of his own thought and shows how his surrealist theory developed in part as a result of his own interpretations of Freud's texts.¹⁰ The following discussion of *Les Vases communicants* therefore does not purport to offer a comprehensive exposition of Freud's dream theories, but rather to show how Breton's

⁸ Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Anna Freud, 18 vols (London: Imago, 1942), II and III, 1-642.

⁹ Breton's interpretations of Freud's thought are often questionable, owing to his tendency to take a phrase out of the context of the essay in which it appeared, and so to mould its meaning to fit his own argument. However, a detailed examination of Breton's reading of Freud's essays goes beyond the bounds of this study. For a discussion of Breton's approach to Freud's theories see Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Les vases non communicants', *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, 302 (1 March 1978), 26-45. Hal Foster summarises the affinities and differences between Freud's and Breton's thought in his *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1993), pp. 2-4.

¹⁰ J. H. Matthews argues that Breton's consideration of Freud's theories, even if (and indeed sometimes because) his understanding of these theories was at times incomplete or incorrect, was fundamental to the development of surrealist theory. Matthews, *André Breton. Sketch for an Early Portrait* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1986), p. 101.

response to his perception of Freud's works demonstrates his own view of the role of dreams.

(a) The relationship between dream and reality

Les Vases communicants is divided into three sections, all of which centre on an attempt to explain correspondences between apparently disparate realms or events. In the first section, Breton is concerned to show that the time and space of dream are analogous to those of waking reality, and so to posit the similarity between these two realms. In the second section he examines apparently fortuitous correspondences between individuals and between events, arguing that these connections are the result of the principle of objective chance. In the final section, Breton explores the relationships between the individual and others and between the poet and the revolutionary, in order to show how subjective desire can transform objective reality. Common to all three sections is an assertion of the prevalence of connections between disparate realms, and the principal opposition shown to be linked in this way is that of dream and waking reality. The recognition of these connections is presented as the antidote to the essential solitude of human existence, a loneliness that, Breton argues, is intensified by the capitalist system.

The basic premise of Breton's treatise is that dream and reality must not be viewed as separate entities, but that the individual should remain aware of the constant interaction between these two realms. Breton expresses his belief in this unity through his rejection of Freud's apparent assertion that psychic and material reality are essentially separate. He conveys his disappointment that, despite acknowledging that the substance of dreams results from waking life, Freud still asserts that 'la nature intime de l'inconscient [essentielle réalité du psychique] nous est aussi inconnue que la réalité du monde

extérieur'.¹¹ According to this truncated quotation from the French version of Freud's *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud would seem to imply the essential separation of the Conscious and the Unconscious, as well as asserting that both realms are ultimately unknowable.¹² Secondly and similarly, in *Les Vases communicants* Breton cites Freud's statement that 'la "réalité psychique" est une forme d'existence particulière qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec la "réalité matérielle"'.¹³ Thus the impression that Freud separates the conscious and unconscious realms appears to be confirmed, and Breton employs this evidence to highlight potential flaws in Freud's theories and to put forward his own, contrasting theory of an equal and dialectical relationship between unconscious and conscious structures.¹⁴ According to this interdependence of dream and reality, Breton contends that the spheres of action and dream cannot be divided:

le rêve puise tous ses éléments dans la réalité et n'implique hors de celle-ci la reconnaissance d'aucune réalité autre ou nouvelle, de sorte que le dédoublement de la vie de l'homme en *action* et *rêve* [...] est un dédoublement purement formel, une fiction.¹⁵

The concomitant assertion to which Breton repeatedly returns is that, since the time, space and causality of the dream world are analogous to those in waking reality, there can be nothing transcendent or supernatural about dream. This rejection of transcendence

¹¹ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 109.

¹² Breton's misrepresents Freud's comparison of the Conscious and Unconscious. In fact, Freud argues that the Conscious is simply part of the Unconscious (by describing the Conscious as the inner circle of the Unconscious), such that all thoughts reach an unconscious stage, but only some continue on to Consciousness. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, II and III, 617.

¹³ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 111. J. H. Matthews (p. 100) asserts that Breton's interpretation does not take account of the ambiguity of Freud's phrase.

¹⁴ Breton affirms 'le manque [chez Freud] à peu près complet de conception dialectique.' Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 111. Cf. Breton's criticism of other dream theories on the basis that they do not propose a dialectical understanding of the relationship between dream and reality, in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 108-18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

reflects Breton's vehement anti-religious stance, which was both a cause and consequence of his growing commitment to Marxism.

Breton also challenges what he views as Freud's one-sided understanding of the relationship between the spheres of dream and waking reality, according to which the Unconscious takes a wholly passive role, significant only inasmuch as it can indicate the source of certain problems in the conscious mind. He makes use of Freud's method of dream interpretation, since he concurs with Freud's association of dream content with impulses from the individual's lived experience, but argues that the conclusions drawn by Freud from these experiments are inadequate. He therefore analyses two of his own dreams by writing what he claims to be a full and honest report immediately on waking, and then interpreting each incident in the dream according to thoughts, feelings and events in his waking life.¹⁶ However, Breton's method differs from Freud's in that he locates the impulses that contribute to the dream in question only in his current and recent experiences, rather than, for example, seeking the sources in repressed memories from his childhood. Moreover, he asserts that, unlike Freud, he attributes an active and positive role to the Unconscious. On Breton's account, just as every element of dream has its roots in the dreamer's waking experiences, so understanding one's dreams can lead to a more profound awareness of oneself, and therefore of the whole universe. As such, dream reality cannot only be plumbed for what it can tell the psychoanalyst about the subject's consciousness, but can also be exploited to enrich and expand that consciousness. The dream is therefore not related only to the past, but also to the individual's future.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 118-34.

Breton makes explicit his rejection of Freud's theory of dreams in particular in respect of this orientation towards the future. He states that Freud considers the dream to be directed at the past, so that it can be employed to overcome psychological problems in the present, but that Freud leaves no space for a consideration of the future.¹⁷ Breton thus separates Freud's methods from his conclusions, privileging the former while arguing that the latter are restrictive.

This creative, two-way communication between the realms of dream and exterior reality that Breton advocates is illustrated by the image of communicating vessels. On Breton's account, the fusion of dream and reality at the base of the vessels can be achieved by poetry. In arguing against the dominance of notions of transcendence, of supernatural and religious ideas that diminish the significance of the human individual, Breton states that poetry's role is to restore man to a position of central significance within the universe.¹⁸ He predicts that poets will achieve this aim by surmounting the current division between action and dream, lending appropriate significance to dream without viewing it as a transcendent force:

Le poète à venir surmontera l'idée déprimante du divorce irréparable de l'action et du rêve. [...] Ce rapport peut passer pour magique en ce sens qu'il consiste dans l'action inconsciente, immédiate, de l'interne sur l'externe et que se glisse aisément dans l'analyse sommaire d'une telle notion l'idée d'une médiation transcendente qui serait, du reste, plutôt celle d'un démon que d'un dieu. Le poète se dressera contre cette interprétation simpliste du phénomène en cause.¹⁹

¹⁷ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 111. Freud had rejected the notion that a dream may have any prophetic qualities in his short essay, 'Eine erfüllte Traumahnung' (1899), in *Gesammelte Werke*, XVII, 19-23.

¹⁸ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 208.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Thus the image of the communicating vessel in Breton's essay takes its meaning from its representation of the integral and equal relationship between dream and reality. For according to this image, the two spheres overlap; each is unthinkable without the other, and each is constituted by its connection to the other. So Breton represents poetry as the point at which dream and waking reality are brought together, suggesting that, by allowing the impulses of the Unconscious to penetrate into conscious reality, poets may enrich that external reality.

(b) Images of Duality

The notion that a third element may be generated by the friction between two disparate elements is central to Breton's surrealist project from its inception. However, the imagery that Breton uses to express this juxtaposition suggests a shift in the idea itself between the 1920s and 1930s. In his first manifesto, Breton evokes the image of a spark that is created by the clash of contradictory elements. The impression given is that the two images are consumed by the confrontation, so that the emphasis rests on the new energy created, which represents surrealist art and the attendant new perception of reality. In *Les Vases communicants*, the image of the spark is evoked again. For example, when analysing his own dreams, Breton notes that desire causes the dreamer to perceive links between apparently disparate objects, since the individual sees connections where he wishes to see them. Breton argues that this tendency to coalesce is particularly striking among poets, who 'savent qu'ils peuvent toujours, sans crainte de tromper, dire de l'un qu'il est *comme* l'autre.' In a footnote to this brief reference to poetry, Breton reflects at length on this juxtaposition of disparate objects, stating that it is the highest task of poetry:

Comparer deux objets aussi éloignés que possible l'un de l'autre, ou, par toute autre méthode, les mettre en présence d'une manière brusque et saisissante, demeure la tâche la plus haute à laquelle la poésie puisse prétendre.²⁰

Breton goes on to argue that the impression of dissimilarity between such objects must be overcome, and that the stronger the dissimilarity appears to be, the more strongly it should be contradicted. The result of such a confrontation is the spark of poetic creativity, resulting in the unity of the objects: 'Ainsi deux corps différents, frottés l'un contre l'autre, atteignent, par l'étincelle, à leur unité suprême dans le feu.'²¹

However, in *Les Vases communicants* Breton also describes this juxtaposition of disparate elements by way of two further metaphors, which give a different impression from that of the spark. The first of these images is a conductive wire, which implies that the two realms of the Conscious and Unconscious are linked by a third, separate, thread. So, although still using electrical imagery, this metaphor differs from the spark in that it suggests the existence of a third element that is separate from the two realms. Breton defines this conductive wire as the supreme aim of surrealism:

Je souhaite qu'il [le surréalisme] passe pour n'avoir tenté rien de mieux que de jeter un *fil conducteur* entre les mondes par trop dissociés de la veille et du sommeil, de la réalité extérieure et intérieure, de la raison et de la folie, du calme de la connaissance et de l'amour, de la vie pour la vie et de la révolution, etc.²²

This evocation of a separate third element is rendered yet more explicit in the following section of *Les Vases communicants*. Here, Breton uses the organic image of capillary tissue as a metaphor for the connection between the unconscious and conscious mind

²⁰ Ibid., p. 181.

²¹ Ibid., p. 181

²² Ibid., p. 164.

(described as the interior and exterior worlds) that is produced by dream.²³ This metaphor is similar to the conductive wire in that it posits a third element, but different in that this element is constituted of both the other realms. So the simultaneous existence of three spatial realms is asserted: the interior and exterior worlds and the capillary tissue that joins them. Furthermore, this liquid imagery resembles the overarching image of the communicating vessels, which are also composed of three separate matters: the liquid in each tube and the intermingling of those liquids at the point where the vessels join. While the images of the spark and the conductive wire express the instantaneous, even violent, nature of surrealist juxtaposition, these liquid-based metaphors represent instead the permanent, ongoing communication between disparate realms. The emphasis is thereby on the existence of a third space, which is constituted of the overlap between the two opposing realms.

This shift from the simple juxtaposition of opposites to a tripartite structure recalls and modifies Breton's definition of surrealism in his second manifesto. In that text, Breton asserts the existence of a point at which traditional binary oppositions are overcome:

Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement.²⁴

The image of communicating vessels elucidates this idea of the resolution of opposites, since it suggests that the two realms are not unified into one single element, but instead remain simultaneously separate and united. Moreover, it becomes evident that this point at which contradictions are overcome is not a supernatural sphere, but rather designates

²³ Ibid., p. 202.

²⁴ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 781. This section of the manifesto is also contained in Breton's preface to *Les Vases communicants*, in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 1350.

the totality of waking and dream reality. Michel Carrouges describes such totality in his analysis of the so-called sublime point in Breton's theory:²⁵

Il ne s'agit pas seulement de philosophie: il ne faudrait pas voir dans ce point suprême un simple point de vue théorique d'où les contraires deviendraient conciliables, mais un point réel, vraiment surréel et central, situé à la fois dans la réalité subjective de la conscience et dans l'univers extérieur. En un mot, c'est le foyer vivant de la totalité du monde.²⁶

Surreality is thus defined not as a transcendent sphere but as the common space shared by external and internal reality. Once again, the image of communicating vessels helps to elucidate this concept, since it visualises an image of two units that may simultaneously be perceived as both separate and unified.

(c) Objective chance

In the second part of *Les Vases communicants*, Breton describes a series of coincidences that he has experienced both in his waking and dream reality. His interpretation of these chance encounters is governed by the same rejection of transcendence as his dream analyses. For example, he tells the following story of a day in Paris, which begins with his looking in second-hand bookshops for a book entitled *Le Vieux Baron anglais, ou les Revenants vengés*, by Clara Reeve. He cannot find the book and is too embarrassed to ask the shop assistant for it. On leaving the bookshop, he encounters a well-dressed man who asks him for money and, when Breton gives him some, the man compliments him as follows: 'Monsieur, je ne sais qui vous êtes, mais je vous souhaite de faire ce que vous

²⁵ The terms 'point suprême' or 'point sublime' are used interchangeably in commentaries on Breton's aesthetics to express his theory of the resolution of contradictions through the fusion of opposites. Breton uses the phrase 'point sublime' for the first time in his book *L'Amour fou* (1937), in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 780.

²⁶ Carrouges, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 23.

devez faire et ce que vous pouvez faire: quelque chose de grand'.²⁷ In a footnote to this passage, Breton states that, after writing this chapter, he finally obtained and read *Le Vieux Baron anglais*, and in it found the following words, which reminded him of what the man whom he had encountered in the street had said: 'Je ne sais, mais je crois entrevoir en vous des marques qui m'annoncent que vous êtes destiné à quelque chose de grand.' Such an unexpected and apparently involuntary similarity between two works, experienced as *déjà entendu*, exemplifies objective chance.²⁸

Although *Le Vieux Baron anglais, ou les Revenants vengés* is a real novel, Breton's mention of it in the context of this dream-like narrative may not be coincidental, for the author's name, Clara Reeve, evokes the French terms 'clair' and 'rêve'. This detail indicates that Breton's narration of his experiences, both waking and sleeping, may contain some fictionalisation. However, Breton makes it difficult for a reader to assess the level of artifice in his narrative, since his aim is to demonstrate that waking reality is structured in a similar way to dream reality. For a reader to reject or question the factual basis of Breton's narrative is therefore to show a lack of faith in his theory that reality can contain as many unexpected connections, coincidences and correspondences as any dream.

Following the narration of the episode, Breton gives further examples of such chance coincidences in waking reality, but continues to insist that they are in no way mystical. He draws connections, *inter alia*, between his experience of being conned out of some money

²⁷ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 166.

²⁸ Ibid. Breton does not mention the term 'hasard objectif' until several paragraphs later, but it is evident from his footnote that he perceives this episode as such. There is a further instance of such coincidence in his narration of this episode, which he nevertheless does not explicitly identify as an example of objective chance. When describing his experience in the bookshop, he states that the books became mixed up with one another through no fault of his own: 'les livres – de même, semble-t-il, que les femmes – tendaient à se substituer les uns aux autres et celui qu'à cet endroit l'on m'avait remis empaqueté n'était pas celui que je voulais.' This description of unexpected exchanges between texts represents the interweaving of works that is exemplified by the unanticipated similarity between *Les Vases communicants* and *Le Vieux Baron anglais*.

(which he believed at the time that he was giving charitably); Paul Éluard's mention soon afterwards of Feuerbach's theory of charity; reading a newspaper article about comen; and the receipt of an article about his second manifesto by a former comrade, J.-P. Samson, who tended to accuse the surrealists of succumbing to mysticism. Breton insists that there is no reason to assume that there is no causal relationship between these incidents, but that they must be understood in accordance with Friedrich Engels's definition of objective chance, which he quotes as follows: 'La causalité ne peut être comprise qu'en liaison avec la catégorie du hasard objectif, forme de manifestation de la nécessité.'²⁹ Breton seems to be referring here to the Marxist view that phenomena that may appear to be fortuitous occurrences are in fact founded in material reality, which is itself governed by definite laws.³⁰ This notion that such coincidences have an objective basis, as opposed to being evidence of supernatural transcendence, is indicative of Breton's concern to remove any mystical connotations from his theory of the coincidence of waking reality and dream reality.

In the final pages of *Les Vases communicants*, Breton relates his theory of connection and communication between apparently disparate realms to the concept of permanent flux. This notion is evoked in part by his allusion to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, and his theory of the harmony created by objects that are held in tension, such as the lyre and the bow; as well as his assertion that sleep can be a productive and creative time: 'les hommes dans leur sommeil travaillent et collaborent aux évènements de l'univers.'³¹

²⁹ The editors of Breton's collected works note that they have been unable to locate this particular quotation by Engels, but that many of his writings refer to the notion that apparent coincidences are just superficial manifestations of underlying necessity. See Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 1364.

³⁰ See the definitions of 'contingency' and 'necessity' in J. Wilczynski, *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1981), p. 120 and p. 381.

³¹ The full quotation from a French translation of Heraclitus's comment on the harmony of opposites, the second half of which is cited by Breton, reads: 'Ils ne comprennent pas comment ce qui s'oppose est d'accord avec soi: harmonie de tensions opposées, comme [celle] de l'arc et [celle] de la lyre.' See Bonnet's notes in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 1415, for details of Breton's reception of Heraclitus.

These references to Heraclitus also evoke the latter's well-known theory of permanent change, which is expressed in his aphorism: 'One cannot step twice into the same river.'³² This notion of constant flux is carried through by Breton in the closing stages of *Les Vases communicants*, such as in his affirmation of 'le retour perpétuel des formes prises sans cesse par le changement.' This flux is presented as the result of the continual communication between exterior and interior reality, as symbolised by the capillary tissue:

Le rôle de ce tissu est, on l'a vu, d'assurer l'échange constant qui doit se produire dans la pensée entre le monde extérieur et le monde intérieur, échange qui nécessite l'interpénétration continue de l'activité de veille et de l'activité de sommeil.³³

Breton's assertion of the interpenetration of the realms of the Conscious and Unconscious is thus bound up with the unification of opposites and therefore with the notion of constant flux. Breton concludes his essay by demonstrating how poetry may best bring to light this unification and flux. He argues that by successfully bridging the gap between the world of action and that of dream, the poet is able to bring together individual and universal emotion, in order to retain 'l'éternité dans l'instant, pour fonder le général dans le particulier.'³⁴ Breton ultimately argues that it is only through the fusion of the objective knowledge of reality with subjective desire, a synthesis that he advocates throughout his essay, that this passage from the singular to the universal, and therefore from dream to action, may be realised.

³² The full text of this fragment reads, in English translation: 'One cannot step into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs.' 'Fragment 51', in Charles H. Kahn (ed.), *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 53. For Kahn's commentary, see pp. 168-69.

³³ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 201-02.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

2 Paul Celan, 'Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume'

Celan's introduction to Jené's lithographs falls into two sections. In the first, Celan describes the experience undergone by a viewer of Jené's lithographs, and the issues and questions about perception and knowledge that are raised by these artworks. The second section consists of a description and analysis of a selection of Jené's lithographs in the light of the essay's introductory discussion. In the first part, the speaker makes explicit his understanding of the central concern raised by Jené's art. He states that, before viewing Jené's artworks, he had already realised that reality was defined by evil and deception, and had sought ways to change this state of affairs. His observation of Jené's works is depicted as a journey:

Zwar hatte ich, ehe ich diese Reise angetreten, eingesehen, daß es arg und falsch zugeht in jener Welt, die ich verlassen, aber ich hatte geglaubt, an ihren Grundfesten rütteln zu können, wenn ich die Dinge bei ihrem richtigen Namen nannte. Ich wußte, daß ein solches Unternehmen die Rückkehr zu einer unbedingten Naivität voraussetzte. Ich sah diese Naivität als eine von der Schlacke der Jahrhunderte alter Lügen von dieser Welt gereinigte und ursprüngliche Schau an. (III, 155-56)

The speaker thus implies that the deception of reality may only be uncovered if the additional meanings that words have taken on are removed. These new meanings are, by implication, deceptive, since they are not related to the original essence of the object in question, but have been taken on as a result of external events. Consequently, the speaker implies that such meanings obscure a view of the world as it really is. The speaker thus advocates a return to the original meanings of words, since he believes that such a regression would ensure that any deception is overcome.

However, ultimately the speaker realises that this approach to language is not viable, but would lead only to a different form of deception. He reaches this conclusion through his recollection of a conversation with a friend about Heinrich von Kleist's treatise 'Über das Marionettentheater' (1810).³⁵ Kleist's essay takes the form of a dialogue between two figures, and notably the section of 'Edgar Jené' in which Kleist's essay is discussed is structured in the same way. As such, the correspondence between 'Edgar Jené' and 'Über das Marionettentheater' occurs on the levels of both form and content. In Kleist's essay, the discussion between the two figures centres on the question of how mankind may rediscover a natural grace, which has been lost due to mankind's excessive self-consciousness. This grace is now evident only in marionettes. The conclusion reached in Kleist's essay is that since a return to a pre-conscious condition is impossible, the only way to achieve a state akin to that original grace is through the absolute application of reason.

The speaker's friend in 'Edgar Jené' appears to argue along similar lines to Kleist's speaker, since he states that such original grace can only be achieved through the application of reason. However, he asserts that this imposition of reason would cleanse the unconscious inner life ('[eine] vernunftsmäßige Läuterung unseres unbewußten Seelenlebens' (III, 156)), and in doing so his argument becomes inconsistent with that in Kleist's essay. For rather than realising, as Kleist's speaker does, that a return to a pre-conscious state is impossible, the friend in 'Edgar Jené' argues that reason must be applied in order to remove all elements of consciousness that have been added over time, so to return the individual to a state of primitive innocence ('Ursprünglichkeit', which the speaker suggests is akin to a state before Original Sin). Allied with this purification of

³⁵ Heinrich von Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater. Aufsätze und Anekdoten* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1980), pp. 7-16.

consciousness is the friend's desire to eliminate all meanings that words have taken on as a result of the events of reality. The example given for this linguistic purification is the word for tree, which he suggests has come to evoke revolution as a result of rebels being hanged in the branches of trees.³⁶ The friend states that the tree must be divested of these additional connotations so that it evokes solely its supposed original and natural connotations: 'ein Blütenzweig, wenn es Frühling würde' (III, 156).

Despite the speaker's objections, the friend insists that, just as words may be purified of their added meanings, so each individual consciousness may be cleansed of the elements that have come to occupy it over time. These elements are depicted by the friend as 'das Wasser des dunklen Brunnens', which must be brought to the surface and evaporated through the heat of the 'Sonne der Gerechtigkeit' (III, 157). This implication that the human mind is plagued with negative impulses, which begin to develop as soon as the infant becomes conscious of its own existence, is highly reminiscent of Freud's theory of the division of the conscious and unconscious spheres. As discussed above, it is this hierarchical division between the Conscious and Unconscious, and the attendant implication that the Unconscious is of use only when its contents are brought into consciousness, which Breton represents as Freud's view and with which he takes issue in *Les Vases communicants*. Therefore, the friend's view in 'Edgar Jené' is reminiscent of what Breton regards as a Freudian approach to the Unconscious.³⁷

³⁶ The mention of the tree in 'Edgar Jené' may also be read as an allusion to the biblical tree of knowledge, of which Kleist asks at end of his essay: 'Mithin [...] müßten wir wieder von dem Baum der Erkenntnis essen, um in den Stand der Unschuld zurückzufallen?' Kleist, p. 16.

³⁷ It is notable that Pretzer, as one of the few critics to assert an ongoing poetic relationship between Celan and the surrealists, is also one of the only readers to interpret the friend's position in 'Edgar Jené' as analogous to that of Freud. However, Pretzer does not note the link between the speaker's theories and those of *Les Vases communicants*. Pretzer, pp. 165-73.

A connection between the friend and Freud is also suggested by the former's assertion that all objects must be cleansed with the 'Königswasser des Verstandes' (III, 156), for the term 'Königswasser' (*aqua regia*) recalls Freud's definition of dream interpretation as 'die *Via regia* zur Kenntnis des Unbewußten im Seelenleben'.³⁸ On this account, readings of 'Edgar Jené' that consider the friend to represent the surrealist movement become less tenable. Sabine Könniker (1995) provides one example of such an approach to Celan's essay. She argues that the friend in 'Edgar Jené' represents a surrealist viewpoint, since that figure contends that the individual's inner life ('Seelenleben') remains constant despite external influences.³⁹ However, such a reading must be revised in the light of *Les Vases communicants*, for in that text Breton questions precisely this separation between internal and external reality and the attendant essentialisation of the Unconscious that, he argues, define Freud's theories. As such, the friend in 'Edgar Jené' figures as a representative not of surrealism but of a Freudian view reminiscent of that which is disavowed in *Les Vases communicants*.

However, while the friend's mention of 'Königswasser' evokes Freud, through its similarity to Freud's evocation of the *via regia*, the two images are sufficiently different to merit consideration. While Freud compares dream interpretation to a path, which should lead to the illumination of the Unconscious, the friend in 'Edgar Jené' argues that water should wash clean ('reinwaschen') the impulses generated by the Unconscious. Freud's metaphor implies that full attention should be paid to the dream, despite any disturbing impressions that it may uncover. By contrast, the friend suggests that such impressions should be ignored, indeed, washed away entirely. Moreover, the term 'Königswasser' has a specific meaning that modifies yet further its relationship to Freud's *via regia*. *Aqua regia*

³⁸ Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, II and III, 613.

³⁹ Könniker, p. 90.

is a concentration of acids that can dissolve gold, and has consequently been used to test whether a metal is genuine gold. The friend is therefore advocating a particularly intrusive form of cleansing. The image of 'das Wasser des Verstandes' would imply mere washing, while 'das Königswasser des Verstandes' suggests the use of corrosive acids, with the implication that valuable elements may be lost in this process of purification, just as gold is dissolved by the *aqua regia* in the process of verifying its authenticity.⁴⁰

The prefix 'König' in the term 'Königswasser' is thus crucial to an understanding of the status of Freud's theories in 'Edgar Jené'. On one hand, it announces a connection between the friend's viewpoint and that of Freud, which is also evident in the friend's other utterances, as outlined above. However, it also draws out a difference between the friend's stance and that of Freud, in that the 'Königswasser' signals a significantly more destructive and uncompromising approach to unconscious impulses than is suggested by Freud's theories. As such, this moment in 'Edgar Jené' may be interpreted as a warning not against Freud's theories *per se*, but against an extreme Freudian psychoanalytical viewpoint that relegates the importance of the Unconscious to a position of complete subservience to reason; and that would ideally seek to destroy it altogether.⁴¹

⁴⁰ In his discussion of Celan's reception of Freud's theories, Rainer Nägele notes the difference between Freud's *via regia* and the friend's *Königswasser*, in that the path image represents a different approach to the Unconscious from the water image. However, he does not go on to consider the specific implications of the *Königswasser* as a corrosive liquid. Nägele, *Reading after Freud. Essays on Goethe, Hölderlin, Habermas, Nietzsche, Brecht, Celan, and Freud* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 147.

⁴¹ Bugs's intertextual reading of 'Edgar Jené' supports this notion that Celan's essay primarily rejects an excessive focus on the efficacy of reason in dealing with the past. Bugs views Celan's discussion of Kleist's 'Über das Marionettentheater' as a response to a recent essay by Johann Muschik. In that essay, 'Vom Adel des Verstandes' (1946), Muschik argues that National Socialism was the result of a lack of reason, thus implying that reason must be affirmed in order to avoid a repeat of such a catastrophe. Muschik therefore refers to Kleist's 'Über das Marionettentheater' as the model for a potential return to a state of innocence by way of reason. See Bugs, pp. 75-76 and p. 79. Muschik's essay appeared in *Plan*, I/v (March-April 1946), 369-76.

The speaker of 'Edgar Jené' presents this conversation with his friend as the impetus for his realisation that a return to the primitive origins of words and things is not a viable solution. He states that his friend's desire to dissolve or cause to evaporate the elements of consciousness that have been, in his view, appended to the primitive consciousness would result in a denial of the past events that have caused these words and things to take on new meanings. The image of the tree can again illustrate this idea, for the speaker implies that to divest that word of its implications of rebellion and hangings would be akin to denying that these events took place. This disregard for the past would result in a timeless view of the world, since there would be no sense of past and future, but only an eternal and consistent commitment to primitive forms and meanings. Such a view recalls Freud's assertions that the Unconscious is timeless.⁴² By contrast, Breton asserts in *Les Vases communicants* that the aim of dream analysis should be to 'sonder la nature individuelle entière dans le sens total qu'elle peut avoir de son passé, de son présent et de son avenir.'⁴³ In 'Edgar Jené', the speaker objects to the friend's desire for timelessness, since it would imply that the events of the past do not have any lasting impact on the shape of reality. This rejection of timelessness thus allies the speaker with Breton and against Breton's conception of Freud.

Indeed, in contrast to the friend's desire for a return to primitive meanings, the speaker in 'Edgar Jené' asserts that these events do change reality, just as they change language:

Hier kündigte sich der erste meiner Einwände an und war eigentlich nicht anderes als die Erkenntnis, daß Geschehenes mehr war als Zusätzliches zu Gegebenem, mehr als ein mehr oder minder schwer entfernbares Attribut des

⁴² In *Die Traumdeutung* Freud states that there is no conception of the past in the Unconscious. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, II and III, 583. The notion that the Unconscious is timeless is then made explicit in his essay *Das Unbewußte* (1915), in *Gesammelte Werke*, X, 264-303 (p. 286).

⁴³ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 205 (Breton's emphasis).

Eigentlichen, sondern ein dieses Eigentliche in seinem Wesen Veränderndes, ein starker Wegbereiter unausgesetzter Verwandlung. (III, 156)

So the speaker rejects the friend's notion that the past can be cleansed in order to return to a state of primitive purity, and thus, by implication, refutes a Freudian view that would seek to remove the repressed features of an individual's Unconscious in order to heal fissures in their consciousness. Rather, the implication of this statement is that, just as the individual's consciousness consists of their own experiences and responses, so reality is constituted of a compilation of real events ('das Geschehene') and as a result is in a state of constant flux ('unausgesetzte Verwandlung').

The speaker's rejection of the separation between the Conscious and the Unconscious is summarised by the friend's reprimand: 'Wie aber, so sprach er, soll das gelingen, wenn du und andere wie du die Tiefe nie verlassen und immerzu Zwiesprache halten mit den finstern Quellen?'.⁴⁴ This notion of dialogue with the depths of the Unconscious, coupled with the celebration of constant flux, parallels the surrealists' view of dreams, as worked out particularly in Breton's *Les Vases communicants*. For the essential and repeated message of Breton's treatise is that dream must not be received unreflectively, but instead should be examined by the conscious mind, thus advocating permanent communication between the conscious and unconscious spheres of existence. The intention is thus not to master the Unconscious by drawing out the relevant elements and bringing them to the surface, as the friend in 'Edgar Jené' indicates, but to establish lasting and fruitful communication between the two realms: 'Zwiesprache [...] mit den finstern Quellen.'⁴⁵ Moreover, the

⁴⁴ The friend's suggestion that the speaker is not alone, 'du und andere wie du', further evokes surrealism by indicating the collective and political commitment of that movement.

⁴⁵ The friend's evocation of the so-called dark sources also highlights an inconsistency in his argument. Immediately preceding the depiction of the 'finstere Quellen', the friend asserts that the Unconscious has limits, comparing it to a well whose bottom is fixed and accessible ('Auch dieser Brunnen habe seinen Grund, der erreichbar sei') (III, 157). Yet the friend's accusation that the speaker

dominant image of 'Edgar Jené' is that of a deep ocean, the 'Tiefsee' in which the viewer of Jené's artworks is immersed. This watery representation of the unconventional, non-traditional perception of reality parallels the association of the Unconscious with water in *Les Vases communicants*.⁴⁶

On this reading of 'Edgar Jené' as a surrealist text in the vein of *Les Vases communicants*, the evidence brought by scholars arguing that in his essay Celan distances himself from surrealism is undermined. For example, Jean Firges interprets the text's preoccupation with the Unconscious and dream as typical of the Freudian aspect of surrealism, but argues that Celan's text diverges from the surrealist aesthetic since his use of language is more controlled and reflective, while the surrealists supposedly left the initiative to the words themselves.⁴⁷ Reference to surrealist automatic writing is more explicit in Könneker's analysis of 'Edgar Jené', who indeed defines surrealism as automatic writing, and thereby states that Celan's 'gewissenhafter Umgang mit Sprache' renders his poetics fundamentally different from that of the surrealists.⁴⁸ Firges's and Könneker's conception of surrealism is based on Breton's early theories, principally his first manifesto; yet Breton's exposition of surrealism in *Les Vases communicants* replaces the unchecked access to the Unconscious that is implied by automatic writing with a reflective approach to

remains defiantly in dialogue with the dark sources presents a different image altogether, one of underground springs whose limits are undefined and potentially unknown. This contradiction undermines the friend's argument, so encouraging the reader to accept the speaker's case as more consistent and credible.

⁴⁶ In his monograph on erotic elements in Celan's poetry, Boyd (pp. 89-95) demonstrates that in one of the poet's Romanian texts written while he was in Bucharest ('Partizan al absolutismului erotic' (1947)), Celan uses water imagery similar to that employed by Breton in his surrealist writings. Yet Boyd argues too that Celan's reworking of the surrealist imagery suggests an ironic detachment from the dogma of surrealism and from Breton's idealistic conception of the Unconscious. Joachim Schulze also notes the proliferation of water imagery in Celan's poetry and prose, but, in line with his examination of the traces of mysticism and Romanticism in Celan's oeuvre, attributes to this imagery Romantic roots, in that in both Romantic writings and Celan's oeuvre the 'Welt der Seele' is also a 'Reich der Gewässer'. Schulze compares Celan's preoccupation with water imagery to E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella *Die Bergwerke zu Falun* (1819) in particular. Schulze, *Celan und die Mystiker* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), pp. 85-87.

⁴⁷ Firges, p. 183.

⁴⁸ Könneker, p. 91.

dream. As such, the high level of reflection that is evident in 'Edgar Jené', and Celan's apparent desire for his text to be comprehensible to his readers, parallels the level of reflection displayed by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*. Consequently, 'Edgar Jené' can indeed be read as expressing a surrealist view in line with that articulated in *Les Vases communicants*.

Monika Bugs also reads 'Edgar Jené' as a rejection of surrealism, yet her exposition of Celan's essay in fact implies parallels with *Les Vases communicants*. Firstly, Bugs argues that Celan does not perceive any surrealist symbols in Jené's lithographs, before arguing that the dominant concept in 'Edgar Jené' runs counter to surrealist theory, since in Celan's text human existence takes centre stage.⁴⁹ In fact, however, Celan's interpretations of Jené's artworks are replete with surrealist symbols. As discussed above, his dominant image of the 'Tiefsee' reflects the symbolism of water for the Unconscious, common within surrealism; and the further dominant image of the mirror is also a significant surrealist motif.⁵⁰ As Jean-Marie Valentin concedes: 'Celan reprend les grands thèmes surréalistes.'⁵¹ Moreover, as my reading of *Les Vases communicants* has demonstrated, in that text Breton himself associates poetry with the centrality of the human being in the universe: 'C'est des poètes, malgré tout, dans la suite des siècles, qu'il est possible de recevoir et permis d'attendre les impulsions susceptibles de replacer l'homme au coeur de l'univers.'⁵² So when read in conjunction with *Les Vases communicants*, 'Edgar Jené' appears not as a rejection of surrealist aesthetics in general, as Bugs and others argue, but as a reflection of certain elements of Breton's later surrealist aesthetics.

⁴⁹ Bugs, p. 79.

⁵⁰ Images of mirrors and reflections pervade 'Edgar Jené', such as the evocation of the 'Meeresspiegel' in the opening paragraph (III, 155). One implication of these mirror images is that the viewer of Jené's artworks is able to view a reflection of reality that has been divested of its falsity, described by Celan's speaker as 'die schöne Wildnis auf der anderen, tieferen Seite des Seins' (III, 155).

⁵¹ Valentin, p. 382.

⁵² Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 208.

The speaker in 'Edgar Jené' appears to confirm this commitment to a particular surrealist viewpoint in his description of the experience of observing Jené's artworks. His encounter with Jené's lithographs is presented as the solution to the problem posed by the speaker towards the beginning of the text: that of how the deception and inauthenticity of reality may be overcome. Having discredited the friend's suggestion that language should be purified, since such purification constitutes a denial of the substance of the past, the speaker turns to Jené's surrealist art. On the speaker's account, this art constitutes a move forwards rather than the regressive strategy suggested by the friend, for the artworks engender an entirely new perception of reality that is achieved by disavowing the conventional modes of perception and expression. For example, according to the speaker, the viewer of Jené's lithographs is lent a new pair of eyes, implying that one's eyes are ruled by convention and so do not see things as they are, but rather as one thinks they should be. Such inauthentic perception is depicted as the result of seeking comparisons with objects in the external world rather than examining the actual characteristics of an object (III, 155).⁵³ Similarly, the speaker's mouth is privileged over his eyes since it has the capacity to speak during sleep, implying that such somnolent expression is more honest than waking speech.⁵⁴ This privileging of the individual's dream reality, such that it is significant in itself and not solely in terms of its relationship to waking life, parallels Breton's affirmation in *Les Vases communicants* of the equal significance of both the conscious and unconscious realms.

⁵³ The notion of seeking comparisons is represented in 'Edgar Jené' by a reference to Carolus Linnaeus, the eighteenth century Swedish botanist who founded the first system of biological classification, still the most commonly used.

⁵⁴ Celan: 'Mein Mund aber, der höher lag als meine Augen und kühner war, weil er oft aus dem Schlaf gesprochen, war mir vorausgeeilt und rief mir seinen Spott zu' (III, 155).

A final salient parallel between 'Edgar Jené' and *Les Vases communicants* occurs at the climax of the first section of Celan's text, in which he celebrates the effect of encountering Jené's artworks. The speaker has already come to the realisation that any linguistic expression will be burdened with the accrued meanings of words:

So mußte ich auch erkennen, daß sich zu dem, was zutiefst in seinem [mankind's]
Innern seit unvordenklichen Zeiten nach Ausdruck rang, auch noch die Asche
ausgebrannter Sinngebung gesellt hatte und nicht nur diese! (III, 157)

The speaker thus realises that he must move beyond conventional forms of perception and expression in order to reach a state of novelty and purity. The description that follows of the experience of viewing Jené's lithographs evokes the image of a spark that is generated by the clashing of disparate elements:

Aus den entferntesten Bezirken des Geistes mögen Worte und Gestalten
kommen, Bilder und Gebärden, traumhaft verschleiert und traumhaft entschleiert,
und wenn sie einander begegnen in ihrem rasenden Lauf und der Funken des
Wunderbaren geboren wird, da Fremdes Fremdesten vermählt wird, blicke ich
der neuen Helligkeit ins Auge. (III, 157-8)

This imagery bears a remarkable similarity to Breton's theory of the juxtaposition of disparate elements. Breton's initial use of the image of the spark in his first manifesto is recalled here, but the notion in 'Edgar Jené' that the words and figures emanate from the most distant realms of the mind parallels more closely Breton's invitation in *Les Vases communicants* to compare 'deux objets aussi éloignés que possible l'un de l'autre'.⁵⁵ As Celan's speaker continues his celebration of this new form of perception, his assertion that it emanates from beyond his waking thought, in a light that is not the light of day

⁵⁵ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 181.

(III, 158), similarly parallels the preoccupation with dream and the night that comes to the fore in *Les Vases communicants*.

Könneker notes the similarity between the images of the spark in 'Edgar Jené' and in Breton's first manifesto, but does not refer to Breton's repetition of that image in *Les Vases communicants*. Such an omission complicates Könneker's analysis of the relationship between Celan's and Breton's poetics. On one hand, she argues that Celan's reflective approach to language is very different from that of surrealism, which she defines as automatic writing. Yet on the other hand, she notes that Celan's image of the spark indeed recalls an image from Breton's first manifesto.⁵⁶ However, these two apparently contradictory facets of Celan's relationship to the surrealists may be reconciled if one sees the image of the spark as a reflection also of Breton's similar image in *Les Vases communicants*. As such, the distance between Celan's poetics and automatic writing that is asserted by Könneker still stands, but a parallel to Breton's revised version of surrealism is also perceptible.

Christine Ivanović's interpretation of the 'friend' in 'Edgar Jené' as a representative of surrealism also leads her to conclude that Celan negates surrealist theories, which nevertheless proves not to reflect the essay's argument. Ivanović maintains that the friend's insistence on the necessity of purifying the Unconscious is a surrealist position, and that Celan's rejection of that concern is therefore akin to a renunciation of surrealism. However, as a consideration of the development of Breton's theories has shown, the friend's stance is indicative not of surrealism but of a Freudian perspective that is rejected by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*. Consequently, the speaker's undermining of his friends' views in 'Edgar Jené' reflects a sceptical approach to psychoanalytical theories,

⁵⁶ Könneker, p. 91.

rather than to surrealism. Ivanović's contention that the friend's views epitomise surrealist theory and therefore that the speaker represents an anti-surrealist stance is also undermined by her assertion that the speaker replaces the friend's supposedly surrealist views with ideas that remain significant within Celan's poetics over the following decade, in particular 'die Begegnung und die Zusammenkunft von Fremden mit Fremdestem'.⁵⁷ However, it is precisely in this expression of encounter in 'Edgar Jené' that the most prominent link to surrealism is evident, through the evocation of the marvellous spark that is produced by the fusion of alien elements.⁵⁸ Consequently, the idea that this theme remains a prominent element of Celan's poetics throughout the 1950s is indicative of the ongoing significance of the surrealist concept of encounter in those poetics.

A surrealist approach in 'Edgar Jené' is also evident in the speaker's description of the figures that populate his new vision as 'Gestalten [...], die ich nicht *wiedererkenne* sondern *erkenne* in einer erstmaligen Schau' (III, 158; Celan's emphasis). Thus the notion of absolute novelty, central to surrealist aesthetics, is affirmed. However, the speaker's previous assertion that any form of expression will naturally contain the traces of previous meanings appears to undermine this celebration of novelty. Indeed, as the speaker goes on to describe and analyse some of Jené's lithographs, this intrusion of the past into the present begins to show through, thus further disavowing the Freudian notion of timelessness. For example, the speaker describes a lithograph by Jené to which he refers as 'Das Blutmeer geht über Land' (III, 160). He interprets this image, which depicts a monstrous red figure stalking through a barren, grey landscape, as a depiction

⁵⁷ Ivanović, 'Eine Sprache der Bilder', p. 547.

⁵⁸ Pennone (pp. 101-02) argues that the striking similarity between Celan's ideas and imagery in this section of 'Edgar Jené' suggests that he adopted them from Breton's first manifesto. However, she does not consider Breton's reworking of the spark image in *Les Vases communicants*.

of the spectre of war, striding through a world that is 'entvölkert und ergraut'.⁵⁹ This interpretation of the image as recalling war demonstrates the extent to which external reality is drawn into these supposed dream images.

Moreover, even the speaker's naming of the lithograph implies the intrusion of real events, for Jené's title for this piece is in fact 'Das rote Meer geht über Land'.⁶⁰ This original title has biblical connotations, recalling the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea. Yet Jené's picture reverses the salvatory image of the Red Sea, since his lithograph depicts the 'sea' as a predatory figure, stalking the land apparently ready to envelop anyone in its path. By juxtaposing this threatening image with the evocation of blood, Celan's rendering of Jené's picture makes the shift away from salvation yet more radical: the Jews are no longer rescued by the Red Sea, but the sea has been transformed into a bloodbath. Whether or not Celan changed the title intentionally, the additional meanings that arise as a result of the evocation of blood parallel the intrusion of physical reality into the reality of the mind, as suggested both in Breton's *Les Vases communicants* and in the first section of 'Edgar Jené'. Celan's version of Jené's picture thus creates a tension between the past and novelty, in that his new rendering (here, renaming the image) evokes memories of past events.

Celan's speaker in 'Edgar Jené' thus purports to attain the novelty and purity of expression that he seeks, yet his interpretation of Jené's artworks suggests that such novelty will always be allied with the intrusion of elements from past and present reality. This apparent contradiction implies that the neologisms celebrated by Celan ('das Neue

⁵⁹ This monstrous figure, visually reminiscent of surrealist depictions such as those by Salvador Dalí, also recalls Breton's reference to surrealist monsters, such as Dalí's *Le Grand Masturbateur* and Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 Têtes*, in *Les Vases communicants*. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, II, 137-39.

⁶⁰ Colin, *Paul Celan*, pp. 89-90.

also auch Reine“) nevertheless remain compounds of existing terms, and that the past meanings of these terms may thus enter into the new word. The penultimate line of ‘Edgar Jené’ may be understood to acknowledge such multivalency: ‘Ich habe versucht, einiges zu berichten, das mir in der Tiefsee einer Seele erschien’ (III, 161). Here, the speaker acknowledges the perspectival nature of his preceding analyses, since by affirming that these images appeared in particular ways to him, he implies that they may nonetheless have different effects on others. This suggestion of perspectival perception is confirmed in the final line, ‘Edgar Jenés Bilder wissen mehr’, for this conclusion indicates that the speaker’s interpretations are neither authoritative nor exhaustive. Rather, they represent just one encounter between the image and a viewer, and between the present of the artwork and the elements of the past that impact on its meaning. The notion that the images know more suggests that other such encounters are possible.⁶¹ By closing his essay with this assertion of multivalency, Celan emphasises the openness of Jené’s artworks, and the significance of that openness for his own understanding of Jené’s surrealist art.

The similarities between the theories expounded in Celan’s essay and those expressed by Breton in *Les Vases communicants* are principally related to the impossibility of separating the conscious and the unconscious mind. These similarities reveal the parallels between Celan’s poetic theory in the late 1940s and Breton’s surrealism of the early 1930s, as well as demonstrating that these surrealist-oriented theories do not amount to a disavowal of the impact of past and present reality on language and existence. On the contrary, in ‘Edgar Jené’ Celan bears witness to an aesthetics that asserts the ongoing and essential communication between the realms of the imagination and external reality, represented

⁶¹ Kōnneker (p. 93) notes this perspectival impression, but does not go further to show that the notion that one image may generate a never-ending series of interpretations, since each moment brings about a new encounter, is akin to the surrealist concept of permanent flux.

by poets like himself who remain in permanent dialogue with the dark recesses of the past.

3 Semantic Shifts

The particular focus on the impact of real events on language that is suggested in 'Edgar Jené' parallels a debate about language that became particularly intense in Germany during the decades after the Second World War. Several studies of the language of the National Socialist regime and of its perceived impact on the German language were published during this period by German philologists.⁶² Many of these studies are based on the assumption that language moulds reality, in that human thought and action are influenced by the prevailing language. This notion of the integral relationship between language and the shape of reality is expressed in 'Edgar Jené', in the speaker's assumption that he may effect a change in reality by transforming his language:

Zwar hatte ich [...] eingesehen, daß es arg und falsch zugeing in jener Welt, die ich verlassen, aber ich hatte geglaubt, an ihren Grundfesten rütteln zu können, wenn ich die Dinge bei ihrem richtigen Namen nannte. (III, 155-56)

Some of the post-war philological studies also contend that the Nazis' insistent use of certain existing phrases to designate new ideological concepts eventually altered the meanings of those words and phrases.⁶³ Particular terms therefore underwent change, in the form either of semantic narrowing, in that the meanings of a term were reduced; or of semantic extension, in that the term gained new meanings. These semantic changes

⁶² The principal exponents of this post-war discourse on language were Victor Klemperer, George Steiner, Cornelia Berning, and H. G. Adler: Klemperer, *Die unbewältigte Sprache. Aus dem Notizbuch eines Philologen LTI* (1946), 3rd edn (Darmstadt: Melzer, 1966); Steiner, 'The Hollow Miracle' (1960), in Steiner, *Language and Silence* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 136-51; Berning, *Vom Abstammungsnachweis zum 'Zuchtwart': Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964); and Adler, 'Wörter der Gewalt', *Muttersprache*, 75 (1965), 213-30.

⁶³ Cf. Georg Stötzel, 'Nazi-Verbrechen und öffentliche Sprachsensibilität. Ein Kapitel deutscher Sprachgeschichte nach 1945', *Sprache und Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 20/cxiii (1989), 32-52.

tend to be denoted 'semantic shifts' by linguists.⁶⁴ The term 'Rasse' provides an example of semantic extension, since under National Socialism this word took on ideological meanings in addition to its original biological connotations.⁶⁵ One of the principal inferences drawn from these linguistic studies was that the continued, undifferentiated use of these terms may allow the values of the Nazi regime to be upheld even after the end of the so-called Third Reich.

The philologist Victor Klemperer, now best known for his diary (published for the first time in 1995) recording his experiences as a Jew in Dresden during the Nazi era, is one of the principal exponents of this theory of semantic shifts. Klemperer's record (1946) of the impact that the National Socialist regime exerted on certain German words and phrases has frequent recourse to the term 'Gift'. He contends that the German language has been poisoned by its use in denoting Nazi activities and ideology, and that consequently vigilance is required to prevent this damaged language from permitting the continuation of Nazi ideology. And fourteen years later, without knowing of Klemperer's study, the British literary critic George Steiner nonetheless drew similar conclusions in his essay 'The Hollow Miracle' (1960). He described the German language as 'infected', stating that 'words lost their original meaning and acquired nightmarish definitions'.⁶⁶ Later still, H. G. Adler (1965) used similarly pathological imagery to describe such linguistic violation, depicting Nazi terminology as a scar on the body of the German language.⁶⁷ Indeed, such an image of scarring has stronger implications than that of

⁶⁴ See Robert J. Jeffers and Ilse Lehiste, *Principles and Methods for Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1982), especially pp. 126-37, for an explanation of the concept of semantic change.

⁶⁵ See Berning, pp. 152-54. Celan avoided using the word 'Rasse' on all but one occasion in his translations, suggesting that he may have perceived it to be tainted after its misuse under National Socialism. See Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ Steiner, p. 142.

⁶⁷ Adler, p. 224.

poisoning, since the body may recover from a dose of poison, while a scar represents a permanent disfigurement.

The idea of the semantic shift is not only thematised in 'Edgar Jené', but the text itself also functions as an illustration of that concept. For example, in the speaker's description of Jené's lithograph 'Das rote Meer geht über Land', Amy Colin identifies potential allusions to Nazi war propaganda, arguing that this imagery is blended with Celan's own metaphors in order to create 'an innovative linguistic reality that forces us [...] to reflect not only upon the consequences of the war but also upon our own historicity.'⁶⁸ Colin thus suggests that a new linguistic reality is created by the convergence of discourses in 'Edgar Jené', some of which emerge as a result of the impact of Nazi propaganda on the German language. This new form of expression is generated by the confrontation of Celan's metaphorical language with these past discourses, and so implies a dialectical structure, whereby a new form is created through the clashing and synthesis of two disparate elements. This juxtaposition differs from the standard discourse on post-war semantic shifts of Klemperer *et al.*, in that the effect of the past on language is not regarded solely as a negative, destructive force, but also as a creative impulse. For on this account, Celan's translations emerge from the clashing of two or more discourses. This notion that the confrontation of disparate elements may bring forth a new element reflects the surrealist discourse of the reconciliation of opposites, as highlighted in *Les Vases communicants*.

The idea that the German language has been altered by the events of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, so that new meanings have been imposed on certain terms, also has implications for the metaphorical use of language. Axel Gellhaus notes that certain terms

⁶⁸ Colin, *Paul Celan*, p. 91.

in Celan's poetry have taken on additional meanings as a result of his experience of the Third Reich. Gellhaus's approach thus parallels that suggested in 'Edgar Jené' and in the post-war discourse on semantic shifts, although he does not make reference to either of these conceptions.⁶⁹ The example given by Gellhaus is the term 'Atemkristall' in line 19 of Celan's poem 'Weggebeizt' (1963; II, 31), since he insists that this neologism cannot only be understood metaphorically. Gellhaus argues that, following Celan's contention that language is fundamentally altered by reality, the non-metaphorical meaning of the noun 'Atemkristall' must also be considered as one component of its meaning. In the context of the Holocaust, the image of the 'Atemkristall' also evokes the crystalline compound *Zyklon B*, which releases a gas that is inhaled (an 'Atemgift').⁷⁰ According to Gellhaus, this non-metaphorical interpretation of the term does not detract from its potential metaphorical meanings, but rather exists alongside those other meanings.

Gellhaus's reading of the term 'Atemkristall' closely parallels the speaker's exclamation in 'Edgar Jené' that the meanings of words have been augmented by 'die Asche ausgebrannter Sinngebung [...] und nicht nur diese!' (III, 157). For according to this phrase, these meanings are not only constituted of the metaphorical ashes of past connotations, but also of the non-metaphorical ashes of the Holocaust victims' cremated bodies. As my interpretations of Celan's translations in the subsequent chapters show, these non-metaphorical meanings also intrude into his German versions of French poems. Thus, just as the neologistic compound 'Atemkristall' is prevented from evoking

⁶⁹ Gellhaus, 'Marginalien', p. 62. Gellhaus does not refer to 'Edgar Jené' to substantiate his argument, but rather to Celan's speech on the occasion of winning the *Literaturpreis der freien Hansestadt Bremen* (known as the 'Bremer Rede') in 1958 (III, 185-86). Written ten years after 'Edgar Jené', the 'Bremer Rede' also argues that language undergoes changes as a result of real events. Although the 'Bremer Rede' is chronologically closer to the 'Atemkristall' cycle, which is Gellhaus's subject, this notion clearly has its roots in Celan's consideration in 'Edgar Jené' of the permanent flux of language.

⁷⁰ *Zyklon B* was the chemical compound, delivered in crystalline form, used in the gas chambers of the Nazi concentration and death camps. Israel Gutman, 'Zyklon B', in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. by Israel Gutman, 4 vols (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1990), IV, pp. 1749-50 (p. 1749).

solely new associations, as a result of the intrusion of past impulses, so the translations are defined by a tension between the old (the original poem) and the new (the German version).

4 Conclusion

The surrealist concept of the clashing of disparate elements is thus embraced in 'Edgar Jené', but in that essay the emphasis is placed on the position of reality in this dialectic. Celan's text thereby parallels Breton's theories in *Les Vases communicants* by rejecting the hierarchical separation of the Conscious and Unconscious that was, according to Breton, advocated by Freud. Moreover, in 'Edgar Jené' the Unconscious is allied with the past through the implication that involuntary memories of past events intrude on the individual's Unconscious. As such, the Bretonian notion of permanent renewal is ostensibly adopted by Celan in his celebration of 'das Neue also auch Reine'; and yet is simultaneously undermined by his recognition of the intrusion of past reality into present consciousness, such as the association of a tree with the hanging of rebels. So while Freudian psychoanalysis, in particular as it is presented by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*, aims to cleanse the mind of the disruptive elements of its Unconscious, by contrast both Breton and Celan seek to remain in permanent communication with these impulses.

Celan thus takes the surrealist proposition of the communication between conscious and unconscious levels and specifies that one of these unconscious levels is constituted of the memories of the Holocaust, such that these memories inevitably intrude into linguistic structures. Two inferences may be drawn from this reconciliation of surrealist theory with the concept of semantic shifts. Firstly, it impacts on an understanding of surrealism by emphasising that there is space within surrealist aesthetics for an engagement with

reality, including the wartime suffering and destruction. Indeed, Jené's wartime works bear witness to this engagement with reality. Secondly, Celan's proposition that the memories of the Holocaust are inscribed in linguistic structures, such that they intrude into current expression whether the speaker intends it or not, is associated in his essay with the surrealist concept of communication between conscious and unconscious levels. Celan's interpretation of the red sea of Jené's lithograph as a sea of blood functions as an example of this interaction between the conscious (here, the lithograph) and unconscious (the involuntary association of the colour red with blood and therefore with the war). Consequently, it is implied that the events of the Holocaust have passed into what may be conceptualised as a linguistic Unconscious.

This implication that traces of past destruction intrude on present linguistic structures parallels the concept of semantic shifts in the post-war German language. As such, Celan's essay on Jené's lithographs both recalls the theories posited in *Les Vases communicants*, and itself represents an instance of communicating vessels, for it marks a point of encounter between French surrealist theory and the theory of the semantic shift, within the third space that is Celan's essay. This connection between surrealism and semantic violation that is generated by Celan's essay shows that, contrary to many existing assessments of 'Edgar Jené', Celan's concern with linguistic violation does not preclude him from an engagement with surrealism. For example, Ivanović argues that Celan was unable to remain committed to surrealist aesthetics in Vienna because he was once again writing in the German language, whose violation as a result of the Second World War transformed his view of poetic language.⁷¹ Yet my analysis of 'Edgar Jené' has shown that surrealist aesthetics and a recognition of such linguistic violation are not

Ivanović, 'Paul Celans Umweg über den Wiener Surrealismus', pp. 68-69.

mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is in 'Edgar Jené' that these positions are reconciled.

The following analyses of Celan's versions of surrealist poems show that the model of the communicating vessels can also be applied to his translation work, in order to conceptualise the semantic duality of these texts. On the one hand, these versions represent 'das Neue also auch Reine', in that they are new and different versions of the original poems. Yet on the other, just as Celan implies in 'Edgar Jené', this novelty is simultaneously undermined by the intrusion of impulses from the past and present. So the clashing of the old and the new is represented by Celan's translation, which evokes both the original poem and the changing state of language after 1945. As such, the translation is itself an instance of communicating vessels, since it highlights the new element generated by the interaction between the old and new poems, which occupies a third space that is akin to the intermingling of the liquids at the base of the vessels.

Chapter 5

Writing after the Disaster: *Surrealistische Publikationen*

Celan left Vienna for Paris in June 1948, and was never again to be as closely involved with surrealist artists and writers as he had been in Bucharest and Vienna. Indeed, his apparent disaffection with the French surrealist movement is expressed in a letter to Edgar Jené and his wife Erica in March 1950: 'ich [hege dem Surrealismus gegenüber] – damit ist Edgars Kunst in keiner Weise gemeint – schwere Bedenken, die hier in Paris manche Bestätigung erfahren haben.'¹ These words do not represent a rejection of surrealism *per se*, but of the manifestations of the movement that Celan encountered in Paris, as distinct from his experience of surrealism in Vienna. As such, the publication in 1950 of the volume *Surrealistische Publikationen*, edited by Jené and Max Hölzer, with which Celan had been involved while he was in Vienna, is both appropriate and out of place. On the one hand, this publication reflects what Celan refers to as 'Edgars Kunst' by announcing itself as 'die erste Manifestation der Avantgarde auf Geistigem und Sozialem Gebiet in deutscher Sprache', for this label establishes it as a specifically German-language volume, containing texts by writers who considered their work to represent a German-language version of the international surrealist movement.² On the other hand, the volume allied itself closely with French surrealism by printing a series of French surrealist texts translated into German, all of which had been written during the previous ten years. The volume thereby also seems to aim to introduce the German-speaking readership to contemporary French surrealism. Celan himself translated a total

¹ Glenn, 'Paul Celan in Wien', p. 103.

² Edgar Jené and Max Hölzer (eds), *Surrealistische Publikationen* (Klagenfurt: Haid, 1950). A second issue of *Surrealistische Publikationen* was published in 1954, to which Celan did not contribute any texts: Jené and Hölzer (eds), *Surrealistische Publikationen*, II (Klagenfurt: Haid, 1954).

of fifteen texts for this volume, by André Breton, George Hénein, Benjamin Péret, Henri Pastoureau, Gellu Naum, Virgil Teodorescu and Aimé Césaire.³

In a letter to Alfred Margul-Sperber in February 1948, Celan wrote of Jené's plans to publish a special issue of Otto Basil's journal *Plan*. He did not mention that this magazine would focus on surrealism, but stated that Breton himself had sent Jené some texts, and mentioned that it would include his own translation of a poem by Césaire.⁴ This correspondence proves that Celan began working on the translations two years before they were published, while he was in Vienna and closely involved with the surrealist artists and poets there. However, as Wiedemann notes, the wording of the letter does not make it clear whether Breton sent a wide selection of texts, of which certain ones were chosen by those involved in the journal; nor is it certain that Césaire's poem was one of the texts sent by Breton. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions from the selection of texts in *Surrealistische Publikationen* about Celan's attitude towards the surrealist movement, since it may be that he did not choose which texts would constitute the volume. Nevertheless, Celan may have chosen which of the given texts he would translate, and indeed, as will be seen, certain similarities between the poems that Celan translated do suggest that he may have chosen them himself, since they appear to reflect his own poetic concerns at the time.⁵

³ André Breton, 'Die Malerei Edgar Jenés' (according to Jerry Glenn (p. 102), this translation was erroneously attributed to Erica Lillegg on the contents page of *Surrealistische Publikationen*); Breton, 'Krieg'; George Hénein, 'Willkommen in Elsenor'; Benjamin Péret, *Ein Punkt ist alles* (five poems); Henri Pastoureau, *Drei Gedichte*; Gellu Naum, 'Wie die Wölfe lieb ichs', 'Laterna Magica'; Virgil Teodorescu, 'Die ertrunkene Schloßfrau'; Aimé Césaire, 'Habt kein Erbarmen mit mir'. Although the poems by Teodorescu and Naum were originally written in Romanian, it is now believed that Celan translated French versions of these poems into German. Olschner and Wiedemann have both commented briefly on some of these translations. See Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 145; and Wiedemann, 'Surrealistische Publikationen', in Gellhaus (ed.), *Fremde Nähe*, pp. 130-35.

⁴ Letter to Alfred Margul-Sperber, 11 February 1948, cited in Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 123.

⁵ Cf. Barbara Wiedemann, 'Surrealistische Publikationen', p. 132.

However, the relationship between Celan's poetics and the poems that he translated is not only significant for what it can tell readers about Celan's attitude to contemporary surrealism. The German versions are also interesting for their illustration of an encounter between two modes of poetic expression and between two socio-historical contexts. This encounter is most marked in Celan's version of Aimé Césaire's poem 'N'ayez point pitié de moi' (1941), both because of the French poem's surrealist style and owing to its particular political context. This chapter therefore focuses on this poem and its translation, in order to demonstrate how a poem that is anchored in one particular socio-historical context may be transferred into another field, while simultaneously remaining true to the perspective of the original poem. Where certain issues may also be illustrated through other poems translated by Celan for *Surrealistische Publikationen*, reference will be made to these, and in particular to Celan's version of Breton's poem 'Guerre' (1944).

The first section of this chapter examines Césaire's poem, showing how it is aesthetically surrealist while also closely engaging with contemporary reality. This section is followed by an examination of Celan's lexical and syntactical interventions in his translation, which may be summarised as an increase in the speaker's agency, thus intensifying the focus on the power of language; and the introduction of a bleaker tone, complemented by possible allusions to the Holocaust. The final section explores this allusiveness by identifying points in the translations at which a German word or phrase, despite being apparently a direct translation of the original French term, takes on additional connotations because of its post-Holocaust context. Since these points reveal the ways in which the semantic properties of certain German words and phrases have been altered by the recent past, I refer to these moments as 'semantic shifts'.

Celan's writing has been described by one critic as 'post-catastrophic', in contrast to T.S. Eliot's 'pre-catastrophic' aesthetics.⁶ This comparison also proves to be a fruitful way of understanding the relationship between Celan and the surrealists as it appears in his translations of the poems under discussion in this chapter. The surrealists, in their attempt to explode conventional boundaries and limits in order to create a new reality, are writing before (and for) a cataclysm. By contrast, Celan's poetic language is post-catastrophic in that it contains within it the memory of the cataclysm of the Holocaust and the resulting violation of language. The following analysis of Celan's translation demonstrates this post-cataclysmic tone and explores its implications for an understanding of Celan's poetics in the context of surrealist theory.

1 Aimé Césaire

(a) Biography and Poetics

Aimé Césaire, the great-grandson of slaves and the son of a tax collector and a dressmaker, was born in Martinique in the French Caribbean in 1913, but lived and studied in Paris from 1931 until 1939. The island of Martinique was a French colony – with brief interludes of British rule – from 1648 until 1946, when it became a French overseas *Département* and thus an integral part of the French Republic, with full citizenship for all its inhabitants. Césaire is best known as a poet, but he also became involved in Martinican and French national politics, as mayor of Fort-de-France for fifty-six years (1945-2001), and as a Communist member of the French National Assembly from 1945-93. Césaire's poetry is generally considered to be surrealist, although he claims

⁶ Corbert Stewart makes this comparison in an essay on Celan's poetry, in the context of T.S. Eliot's line, 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins'. Stewart argues that 'with Celan one has the sense that the shoring and structuring of fragments is post- not pre-cataclysmic and that comfort of any transcendental nature is at most a matter of tantalizing flashes given off by glass irreparably shattered.' Stewart, 'Some problems in reading Celan', *London German Studies*, 2 (1983), 135-49 (pp. 137-38.)

to have developed his aesthetics in isolation from Breton's surrealist group. It was only in 1941, when Césaire became acquainted with Breton for the first time (when the French poet was in exile in the United States and the Caribbean), that both Césaire and Breton became aware of the similarity between Bretonian surrealism and Césaire's poetry. Césaire scholar Michael Lequenne states that Breton 'discovered' a surrealist aesthetic in Césaire's work, and Patrice Louis argues that Césaire only realised that his poetry was surrealist through his encounter with Breton.⁷ Césaire's own words on the genesis of his first publication, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), seem to support this concept of unintentional surrealism, since his description of his creative approach bears a striking resemblance to surrealist *écriture automatique*.⁸

Toute la métrique traditionnelle me gênait beaucoup, me paralysait. Je n'étais pas content. Un beau jour, je m'étais dit: 'Après tout, fichons tout en l'air.' Puis je me suis mis à écrire sans savoir ce qui en sortirait, vers ou prose. Il m'importait de dire ce que j'avais sur le cœur.⁹

Césaire's comparatively late arrival on the international surrealist scene allowed him to retain a distance from Breton's movement. In a journal article of 1969, he claimed that he had experienced the discovery of Breton's surrealism as a justification of his poetry, but that he did not feel the need to belong to the group: 'je n'ai jamais voulu appartenir au mouvement surréaliste parce que ce à quoi je tiens le plus, c'est ma liberté'.¹⁰

In this same article, Césaire goes on to express the fundamental significance of his race, above and beyond his commitment to surrealism: 'je voulais bien me servir de

⁷ Michael Lequenne, 'Césaire Surréaliste', *Œuvres et Critiques*, 19/ii (1994), 70; and Patrice Louis, *ABC...ésaire: Aimé Césaire de A à Z* (Martinique: Ibis Rouge, 2003), p. 142.

⁸ Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), in *La Poésie*, ed. by Daniel Maximin and Gilles Carpentier (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), pp. 7-65.

⁹ From a conversation between Césaire and Georges Ngali in 1967, cited in Louis, p. 25.

¹⁰ *Magazine littéraire*, November 1969, cited in Louis, p. 142.

surréalisme comme d'une arme, tout en restant fidèle à la négritude'.¹¹ Césaire coined the term 'négritude' in 1934, and his own description of the concept defines it as an expression of identity based on ethnicity, and therefore of solidarity between black Caribbeans and black Africans.¹² Césaire's preoccupation with both past and present violence and oppression, in the forms of slavery and colonialism respectively, suffuses his oeuvre and ensures a deep commitment to reality. As a result of this foundation in reality, his aesthetics appear to diverge from those of Breton. However, Lequenne argues that Césaire's poetry may be aligned with Breton's own conception of surrealism as the convergence of poetry and revolution, since both theories comprise the double objective of transforming the world and changing life.¹³ Césaire's concern with the importance of liberty, that is to say, the freedom of his countrymen from colonialism, as well as his absolute commitment to Communism, support this commitment to revolution. As will be seen, the poem by Césaire that Celan translated expresses this surrealist hope for a cataclysmic transformation of current conditions.

However, Gregson Davis argues that Césaire's poetry differs from Bretonian surrealism in the former's conception of the marvellous, which cannot be fully aligned with the European surrealist view of the marvellous as 'an artificially fabricated, escapist world of make-belief [sic].'¹⁴ By contrast, according to Davis Caribbean surrealists employ the marvellous in order to establish a connection to their African heritage, which is represented by religious belief and cult. By employing the realm of the marvellous to

¹¹ Louis, p. 142. Césaire's description of surrealism as a weapon is reflected in Césaire scholar Bernadette Cailler's assessment of the poet's use of the surrealist movement as 'dynamite surréaliste', in order to free himself and be able to return to his roots. Cailler, *Proposition poétique: Une lecture de l'œuvre d'Aimé Césaire* (Sherbrooke, Québec: Naaman, 1976), p. 55.

¹² The term 'négritude' was first used by Césaire in an article in his journal *L'Étudiant Noir*, entitled 'Nègrerie'. See Louis, pp. 96-98, for a more detailed analysis of 'négritude'. What is often considered Césaire's essentialist treatment of race has brought several accusations of racism against him: see Louis, p. 130.

¹³ Lequenne, p. 69

¹⁴ Gregson Davis, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 75.

establish this cultural and historical link between two peoples, rather than a projected connection between two objects (as in Breton's conception of surrealism), Césaire's poetry thus differs from Bretonian surrealism.

Nevertheless, the fact that Césaire was immediately recognised as surrealist by Breton, and that he remained in Breton's favour when Breton distanced himself from so many other erstwhile surrealists, shows that such a theoretical departure from the tenets of Bretonian surrealism need not constitute a disavowal of the whole movement.¹⁵ Davis sees Césaire's project as one of oblique political criticism through poetry, and yet this factor does not prevent him from classing Césaire as a surrealist because of the stylistic and thematic similarities in terms of the role of the Unconscious; the juxtaposition of disparate objects; the redefinition of reality through the fusion of art and the real; and the focus on liberty.¹⁶ Cailler similarly contends that surrealist qualities suffuse Césaire's works, in particular his collection of poetry *Les Armes miraculeuses* (1944), noting that Césaire's commitment to the surrealist movement during the 1940s is evident from his articles in his journal, *Tropiques*.¹⁷ It thus appears that Césaire opened up a space within surrealism for his particularly committed response to the contemporary world. The poem that Celan translated, 'N'ayez point pitié de moi', was written while Césaire was involved with international surrealism, and as the following reading shows, it reflects that commitment as well as his preoccupation with race and his rejection of colonialism.

¹⁵ That Césaire remained in Breton's favour is evident by his inclusion in the 1947 International Surrealist Exhibition.

¹⁶ Davis, p.p. 68-69.

¹⁷ Cailler, p. 64. Together with his wife, Suzanne Césaire, Césaire published a literary journal entitled *Tropiques* between 1941 and 1943. Cf. *Tropiques. 1941-1945. Collection complète* (Paris: Place, 1978). See for example Suzanne Césaire's article, entitled '1943: Le Surréalisme et nous', *Tropiques*, 8-9 (October 1943), 14-18.

(b) 'N'ayez point pitié de moi': Poetics and Politics

N'AYEZ POINT PITIÉ DE MOI

Fumez marais

les images rupestres de l'inconnu
vers moi détournent le silencieux crépuscule
de leur rire

Fumez ô marais coeur d'oursin
les étoiles mortes apaisées par des mains merveilleuses jaillissent
de la pulpe de mes yeux.

Fumez, fumez
l'obscurité fragile de ma voix craque de cités
flamboyantes
et la pureté irrésistible de ma main appelle
de loin, de très loin, du patrimoine héréditaire
le zèle victorieux de l'acide dans la chair
de la vie – marais! –

telle une vipère née de la force blonde de
l'éblouissement.¹⁸

First published in *Tropiques* in 1941, 'N'ayez point pitié de moi' was included under the title 'N'ayez point pitié' in Césaire's volume *Les Armes miraculeuses* (1944).¹⁹ This poem has both poetological and political connotations. Davis considers the poem to be a response to Guillaume Apollinaire's poem 'La jolie rousse' (1918), which he terms a 'modernist apologia' and which ends: 'Ayez pitié de moi'. Davis interprets Apollinaire's poem, and

¹⁸ Césaire, *La Poésie*, p. 83.

¹⁹ *Tropiques*, 3 (October 1941), 25. Césaire's poems 'Survie', 'Au delà' and 'Perdition' are also printed in this issue (24-27). Celan's translation of the poem appears to be based on the original version, from *Tropiques*, since he keeps the full title: 'N'ayez point pitié de moi' / 'Habt kein Erbarmen mit mir'. For this reason, the original version from *Tropiques* is printed here. The comma in line 8 and the exclamation mark in line 14 are absent in the version in *Les Armes miraculeuses*.

particularly this last line, as a plea for the reader's acceptance of the poetic innovations of the modernist movement. So by entitling his poem 'N'avez point pitié de moi', Césaire 'seems to be differentiating his own brand of modernism from that of the European precursor who is responsible for coining the term "surrealism"'. Davis goes on to interpret this poem as Césaire's 'counter-assertion of a special identity within the unbounded space opened up by modernism.'²⁰ As such, this poem represents precisely Césaire's open relationship with the surrealist movement, as discussed above, and asserts the poet's freedom to forge his own aesthetic identity.

The image of steaming swamps with which the poem begins reflects the theme of putrefaction and stagnation common to Césaire's oeuvre. The swamp represents both the stagnation of a colonised population and the decay that Césaire associates with that form of rule. Yet at the same time the steaming of the swamps implies the potential for future activity. Volcanic imagery occurs frequently in Césaire's oeuvre, similarly suggesting the potential for eruption, which may be interpreted as revolt. J. Michael Dash considers the volcano, along with other instances of 'jaillissement' in Césaire's oeuvre, to be suggestive of revolt.²¹ The steaming swamps and the 'jaillissement' in 'N'avez point pitié de moi' (line 6) are thus examples of this kind of symbolism.

The ambiguity of the swamp image, in that it appears to represent both the negativity of colonialism and the positive hope for future liberation, continues throughout Césaire's poem. The 'images rupestres de l'inconnu' suggest a desolate rocky landscape, perhaps evoking volcanic topography. But this bleakness is counterbalanced by the potential

²⁰ Davis, p. 84.

²¹ J. Michael Dash, 'Le cri du Mome: La Poétique du paysage césairien et la littérature antillaise', in Jacqueline Leiner (ed.), *Soleil éclaté: mélanges offerts à Aimé Césaire à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire par une équipe internationale d'artistes et de chercheurs* (Tübingen: Narr, 1984), pp. 101-10 (p. 104).

positivity of the ‘unknown’, which implies the possibility of discovery and new creation. As this second stanza continues, the counterpoint of the crepuscular silence and the laughter similarly suggests the potential for an explosion of activity. Indeed, the silence at dusk implies a calm before the storm, a moment of suspension before night descends, with its intimations of wonder and creativity.

The potential for creativity is further emphasised in the third stanza, with the depiction of hands and eyes, followed by the addition of a voice in the subsequent stanza. The ‘mains merveilleuses’ may indicate the hands of the surrealist poet, allied with his eyes and his voice to suggest the full complement of the poet’s modes of perception and expression. The repetition of ‘fumez’ at the beginning of the third stanza then confirms the intensification of activity brought about by the poet’s expression. As Abiola Irele notes, the image of fire in Césaire’s poems tends to be ambivalent, since it can suggest both destruction as well as the provision of heat, vitality and renewal.²² Thus the description of the cities as ‘flamboyantes’ not only evokes images of wartime destruction, but also the potential for regeneration and future vitality. An association between this image and vitality is further suggested by the fact that the noun ‘flamboyant’ is the name of a tree with red blossoms found in Martinique.²³ The notion that the speaker’s voice is exploding with these flamboyant cities thereby suggests the power of the poet’s voice to destroy and renew.²⁴

The phrase ‘patrimoine héréditaire’, an expression coined in the twentieth century to describe an individual’s genetic make-up, reflects Césaire’s concern with ethnicity. The

²² Irele, ‘Les obscures espérances ou l’imagerie de l’œuvre poétique d’Aimé Césaire’, in *Soleil éclaté*, pp. 217-31 (p. 223).

²³ Davis, p. 85.

²⁴ Irele’s citation of a phrase from one of Césaire’s poems, ‘ma parole puissance du feu’, supports this connection between the power of the voice and the image of fire. See Irele, p. 222.

use of such specific scientific terminology is not unusual in his poetry. Indeed, his aim for precision in his expression has led him to use specific technical vocabulary from the spheres of medicine, biology and geology, among others.²⁵ In the context of the beginning of line 12, 'de loin, de très loin', the 'patrimoine héréditaire' evokes the speaker's ethnic heritage and his sense of geographical displacement. The positivity of this assertion of belonging is compounded by the celebration of the 'zèle victorieux' in the following line. However, an indication of slavery is again evoked by the image of acid: 'l'acide dans la chair'. This image parallels the evocations of infection and corruption that punctuate Césaire's poetry. René Hénane argues that Césaire uses such metaphors of putrefaction and infection to symbolise the effects of colonial subjection.²⁶ In this context, the acid in the flesh can represent the suppression of the slaves, perhaps even literally, by alluding to the branding of the slaves' skin.

At the same time, the rhyme of 'chair' with 'héréditaire' lends a positive note to the image of flesh. Indeed, a sense of the physical relationship between the individual and their homeland suffuses Césaire's poetry. This relationship comes to the fore in Césaire's definition of *négritude* in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*:

Ma négritude n'est pas une pierre sa surdité ruée contre
la clameur du jour
ma négritude n'est pas une taie d'eau morte sur l'œil
mort de la terre
ma négritude n'est ni une tour ni une cathédrale

²⁵ René Hénane documents the extent of these specific, specialist terms in his *Glossaire des termes rares dans l'œuvre d'Aimé Césaire* (Paris: Place, 2004). In respect of this use of rare technical terms, Césaire's poetic practice is very similar to Celan's. Indeed, marginalia in Celan's copy of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* suggests that Celan appreciated in particular Césaire's striving for precision and clarity. In Breton's introduction to *Cahier*, Celan underlined the following footnote: 'Je demande ainsi que la poésie possède toutes les qualités qu'on réclame de la prose, qui comprennent en premier lieu nudité, précision, clarté...'. Celan's copy of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Bordas, 1947) is held in the DLA in Marbach.

²⁶ Hénane, *Aimé Césaire, Le Chant blessé. Biologie et poétique* (Paris: Place, 1999), p. 98.

elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol
elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel
elle troue l'accablement opaque de sa droite patience²⁷

The image of flesh is thus simultaneously positive and negative in 'N'ayez point pitié de moi'. As such, the poem reflects the ambivalence that suffuses *Les Armes miraculeuses*, summarised by Hénane: '*Les Armes miraculeuses* se révèlent donc comme une méditation profondément charnelle et onirique sur la traite des esclaves [...] depuis le passé cruel et douloureux jusqu'au futur paradisiaque.'²⁸

After the ambivalent images of acid and flesh, the 'marais' interrupt the flow of the poem, planted at the end of the penultimate stanza between two dashes. This sudden intrusion suggests the eruption of the swamps themselves, no longer steaming but now bursting into life. The final couplet supports this impression, since it evokes an overwhelming occurrence, perhaps the eruption of the swamps, resulting in a new birth. One of Paul Éluard's theoretical statements suggests that the term 'éblouissement' is positively charged within the surrealist aesthetic: 'La multiplicité jamais abusive des images produit à l'oeil de l'esprit un désordre éminemment compatible avec le *ton*. Tout se précise dans l'éblouissement.'²⁹ Thus by ending the poem on this note, Césaire celebrates the new creation that can arise from a surrealist cataclysm. Images of snakes figure frequently throughout Césaire's oeuvre, often suggesting resurrection or regeneration. G. Durand contends that, as a symbol of the earth, the snake is also associated with land and

²⁷ Césaire, *La Poésie*, p. 42.

²⁸ Hénane, *Aimé Césaire*, p. 234. Hénane's view of the ambivalence of blood in Césaire's imagery (pp. 41-72) parallels that of flesh, for he argues that blood can be positive, in the sense of ethnicity, or negative, in that it suggests spilled blood and therefore colonial violence.

²⁹ Éluard and Breton, 'Rhétorique', *Notes sur la poésie* (1936), in Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 478-81 (p. 480) (Éluard's emphasis).

therefore with ancestral heritage.³⁰ And this connection is supported by Césaire's depiction of the conflict between white colonists and black Africans, in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*: 'chien blanc du nord, serpent noir du midi'.³¹ The final rebirth in 'N'ayez point pitié de moi' can thus suggest the desired liberation of the colonised subject from the stagnation caused by centuries of submission. The poem thus portrays a redemptive break with the past, and a resulting hope for the future, which may be interpreted as Césaire's desire for the future liberation of the colonised states.

2 Celan's Translation

Celan's translation of this poem is among the first translations of surrealist poems by Celan after his translations from Éluard's *Capitale de la douleur*. As established in the analysis of those translations, Celan's homage to Éluard results in translations that to a great extent reflect, and sometimes even heighten, the typically surrealist elements of the French poems. These translations for *Surrealistische Publikationen* were written in a markedly different context. Celan had left Bucharest where, as he later stated and as contemporaries' accounts have confirmed, he felt at home and among friends in a way that he never did afterwards in either Vienna or Paris.³² In Vienna, Celan was living for the first time in the former German *Reich*, and his own comments suggest that he was permanently aware of the likelihood that many of the Austrians with whom he came into contact had collaborated in some way with the Nazi regime.³³ Celan may therefore have felt the spectre of Nazism more keenly than in Bucharest. The way in which Celan translated Césaire's poem suggests the inscription of this acute awareness of the past into his poetic expression, which subdues the surrealist hope for cataclysmic renewal. The

³⁰ G. Durand, cited in Hénane, *Aimé Césaire*, p. 216.

³¹ Césaire, *La Poésie*, p. 55.

³² Cf. a letter from Celan to Petre Solomon in September 1962, in which Celan states that it was only in Bucharest that he had had 'des amis poètes'. Cited in Solomon, 'Paul Celans Bukarester Aufenthalt', p. 221.

³³ Felstiner, p. 51.

translation therefore has implications for an understanding of Celan's poetics, as well as of his treatment of surrealist aesthetics.

HABT KEIN ERBARMEN MIT MIR

Raucht ihr Sümpfe
Des Unbekannten Bilder ein Felsengewächs
kehren mir zu einem schweigsamen Dämmer
ihr Lächeln
Raucht ihr Sümpfe ihr See-Igelherzen
Aus meiner Augen Mark tritt ein toter
Stern um den andern getröstet
von Händen wunderbar

Raucht und raucht wieder
Dünne Finsternis red ich die stöhnt
im Schein der flammenden Städte
So rein ist meine Hand daß nichts
ihr widersteht so ruft sie
aus fernstem Erbgut herbei den siegreichen Eifer
der Säure im Fleische des Lebens – o Sümpfe –

wie eine Otter von der blonden
Macht der Verblüffung
Geboren

(a) Increasing the speaker's agency

In Césaire's poem, the speaker is only referred to indirectly, in phrases such as 'vers moi', 'la pulpe de mes yeux' and 'l'obscurité fragile de ma voix'. As such, the words themselves seem to take precedence over the speaker's actions. By contrast, in Celan's version the speaker is rendered more active. Césaire's phrase: 'l'obscurité fragile de ma voix craque

de cités / flamboyantes’, is translated as: ‘Dünne Finsternis red ich die stöhnt / im Schein der flammenden Städte’. In Césaire’s poem, the voice is passive, in that it is constituted by the ‘obscurité fragile’, while in Celan’s version it appears to be active, creating the ‘dünne Finsternis’. This increase in the speaker’s activity is paralleled by Celan’s insertion of a first person pronoun, where there is none in the original.

A similar shift towards the speaker’s agency occurs in Celan’s version of Breton’s poem ‘Guerre’ (IV, 751-52). In that poem, the random and irrational nature of war, which is represented as a beast, is expressed through the unexpected juxtaposition of imagery within a fast-paced, unpunctuated, chaotic stream of words. The impression given is that even the speaker does not have control over the stream of words. Yet Celan’s restructuring of part of Breton’s poem introduces an impression of the speaker’s agency. In his version of line 23 of Breton’s poem, the phrase ‘ich frage’ is inserted and the pause at the end of the line is lent a new meaning:

Et l’on voit est-ce de rire se convulser des filous au fond d’une taverne
Ce mirage dont on avait fait la bonté se raisonne

Und im Dunkel einer Taverne sieht man Spitzbuben sich krümmen ich frage
ist es vor Lachen
Das Trugbild aus dem man die Güte gemacht geht zurück auf
sich selber

Breton’s jolting and chaotic phrase, rendered thus by the unpunctuated interjection of a rhetorical question and the inversion of the verb (‘se convulser’) and the noun (‘des filous’), is re-ordered by Celan, resulting in a more immediately evocative image. The insertion of the first person pronoun ‘ich’ in this line of the German version is also significant, as it emphasises the speaker’s existence, and the verb ‘fragen’ makes explicit

the speaker's rhetorical intervention. While the chaotic syntax of Breton's poem suggests that the speaker is bowing to the onslaught of words of which he has lost control, the presence and power of the speaker's language is brought to the fore in this line of Celan's translation.

In addition, although Celan maintains Breton's lack of punctuation, the shifting of the rhetorical question to the end of the line separates it from the rest of the phrase. Moreover, this re-positioning of the question affords it two apparent answers, which are entirely lacking in Breton's poem: in the silence at the end of the line, and in the term 'das Trugbild' (paralleling 'mirage') at the beginning of the following line. This pause at the end makes the answer to the speaker's question painfully evident: there is no laughter, but merely the silence of death. The image may thus be one of young men doubled over in pain, possibly after being shot. The word 'Trugbild' then seems to confirm this negative response, by suggesting that this image of laughing youngsters is an illusion.

This impression of the power of linguistic expression itself is further conveyed in Celan's versions of poems by Benjamin Péret and Virgil Teodorescu in *Surrealistische Publikationen*. In these poems, Celan invariably replaces resemblance with identification. Phrases such as 'semblable à' ('Sais-tu'); 'apparaître comme' and 'ressembler à' ('Lundi'); 'pareil à' ('Où es-tu'); and 'comme' (twice in 'La chatelaine noyée') tend either to be omitted or replaced by the verb 'sein', such as in the following lines from Péret's 'Où es-tu':

Je voudrais te parler comme une rame de métro en panne à l'entrée d'une station
où je pénètre avec une écharde dans un orteil pareil à un oiseau
dans une vigne

Ich möchte reden zu dir wie ein Zug der Untergrundbahn der vor seiner

Einfahrt in die Station stecken bleibt
Die ich mit einem Splitter in der Zehe betrete der ein Vogel in einem
Weinstock ist (IV, 776-7)

While these lines contain an example of a direct translation of 'comme' as 'wie', they also include Celan's suppression of such comparative language through the replacement of 'pareil à' with 'ist'.³⁴ It therefore cannot be said that Celan suppresses all of these instances of comparison, but these poems do suggest a tendency to do so. Wiedemann maintains that in avoiding these explicit 'wie' comparisons Celan gives his readers space to make the connections themselves.³⁵ In fact, however, the removal of such comparative words insists on the existence of a connection: something 'is' rather than 'is like', and therefore these interventions may be interpreted as further confirmation of the creative power of language to generate links between images. While the French and Romanian surrealist poems in question merely bring two objects together by asserting a similarity, Celan's versions remove these convergences from the realm of perception and instead use linguistic structures to assert absolute identification: 'der ein Vogel in einem Weinstock ist'. So where Péret's poems challenge conventional modes of perception, Celan's versions invite a transformation of reality itself.

(b) Holocaust allusions

The increase in the speaker's agency, identified in Celan's insertion of the phrase 'ich frage' into his translation of Breton's poem, also renders that line bleaker. The pause at the end of the line suggests that the answer to that apparently rhetorical question is in fact the silence of death. Instances of such bleakness suffuse Celan's translations in *Surrealistische Publikationen*. This tone in Celan's rendering of Césaire's poem 'N'ayez point

³⁴ Pennone (p. 111) notes this change in Celan's version, but states that this translation otherwise remains very close to the original. She therefore concludes that the rendering of 'comme' as 'ist' may arise from a mistake on Celan's part.

³⁵ Wiedemann, 'Surrealistische Publikationen', p. 132.

pitié de moi' is particularly striking, since the original poem is suffused with hope for a future liberation. Yet in Celan's version, undertones of post-Holocaust despair are added to Césaire's hope for liberation from colonialism, through the introduction of two sets of new associations: the wounding and death of an individual; and a lack of closure.

The first of these new sets of associations, individual wounding and death, is present in Celan's rendering of lines 6 and 7 of Césaire's original poem, in that the triumphant positivity of the French poem is defused. That the 'étoiles mortes' 'jaillissent' suggests a return to life, and that the stars may be revived by the 'mains merveilleuses' of the surrealist poet. By contrast, Celan's syntactical interventions replace this poetological positivity with an image of human death, since the verb 'treten' for 'jaillir' is less dynamic and more anthropomorphic. This shift into the human realm is intensified by the line break between 'toter' and 'Stern', so that, aurally, a new phrase emerges: 'tritt ein Toter'. The German poem thus produces an image which is absent in the original version, that of a dead individual. In addition, this intimation of individuality is rendered more compelling through Celan's alteration of the plural 'étoiles' to the singular 'Stern'. Although the phrase 'ein toter / Stern um den andern' does suggest a collection of stars, the evocation of one individual star implies a singularity that is wholly absent in Césaire's poem. Finally, a lexical change of the same order as that of 'jaillissent' to 'tritt' occurs at the end of the two poems. Celan translates the final word of the French poem, 'l'éblouissement', with 'Verblüffung'. While the French word carries associations of brightness and amazement, the German alternative has a more subdued tone, suggesting excess and lack of control: amazement caused by the impossibility of understanding, rather than by the impressive nature of the sight. Again, the triumphant tone of the French line is undermined by the addition of a bleak, despairing tenor.

In addition to such lexical choices, the syntax of Celan's version also impacts on an interpretation of these lines. Celan isolates the 'mains merveilleuses' and places them at the end of the stanza, translating them as 'von Händen wunderbar'. While this German phrase appears to be a direct translation of 'par des mains merveilleuses', the positioning of the adjective after the noun is grammatically unconventional and thereby alienating.³⁶ As the words are rendered unfamiliar by the awkward word order, so the reader takes their meaning less from the context and more from the words themselves. Connotations thus enter the poem that are not evident in the original version, and that may even conflict with the apparent meaning of the term. For example, the term 'wunderbar' may be either an adjective or an adverb; or it may be separated into discrete parts, thereby connoting both a miracle ('das Wunder'), and wounding (in the adjective 'wund'). Celan's translation of the word 'merveilleuses' thereby reproduces the sense in the original poem that poetry contains the wonderful potential to revive the dead, yet overlays it with a suggestion of individual death, so that both of these impressions co-exist in the new poem.

Syntactical change contributes to a shift in tone in the third stanza of the original:

[...] du patrimoine héréditaire
le zèle victorieux de l'acide dans la chair
de la vie – marais! –

aus fernstem Erbgut herbei den siegreichen Eifer
der Säure im Fleische des Lebens – o Sümpfe –

³⁶ Bernhard Böschstein notes precisely this process in his analysis of Celan's translations of the French writer Jean Daive's poetry: 'Celan's German reproduces, and thus estranges, the sequence of substantive and adjective that is so natural to the French'. Böschstein, 'Paul Celan's Translations of French Poetry', *ACTS*, 8/9: *Translating Tradition: Paul Celan in France* (1988), pp. 40-49 (p. 43).

Celan's translation of the 'marais' at the end of this stanza transforms the impression of eruption suggested in the original poem into a repeat of the call to the swamps. The omission of the 'ô' at this point in the French poem suggests a progression from the second stanza, whereby the swamps are no longer just being addressed by the speaker but are erupting into the poem, but this progression is not evident in Celan's version. Consequently, the positivity associated with the evocation of life in Césaire's poem is more muted in the new poem, since it is still related to the stagnating swamps. These syntactical and lexical changes subdue these lines of the German poem, rendering the cry 'o Sümpfe' more mournful than triumphant.

The impression of physical violation is also reflected in Celan's translation of Breton's poem 'Guerre'. Celan's lexical choices in this version tend to bring the poem's focus onto the atrocities of war. For example, the second line of the German version replaces the verb 'se confondre' with 'begatten'. The more abstract notion implied by 'se confondre', of 'blending in' or 'confusion', is suppressed by the explicit physicality of 'begatten' ('to copulate'). The French verb implies passivity, while the German is active and threatening, suggesting sexual predation. This change at the beginning of the translation shifts the tone of the whole poem. For while Breton's beast is seemingly unobtrusive, subtly insinuating itself into its surroundings, Celan's is immediately intrusive, violating everything in its path.

This aggressive impression is compounded by the term 'sturmflutfarbnen' (line 3). The colour of the beast's eyes do not evoke the relatively innocuous 'houle' ('swell' or 'surge'), but rather the dynamic and perilous 'Sturmflut'. The term 'sturmflutfarbnen' is both alienating and evocative at the same time, as a result of its neologistic quality, coupled with the recognisable and powerful image of the 'Sturmflut'. Moreover, the internal

rhyme of 'couleur de houle' is replaced by the harsh alliteration and dynamism of the compound 'sturmflutfarbnen', intensifying this impression of aggression and threat.

(c) Lack of Closure

The reduction of the triumphant tone of Césaire's poem is paralleled by an undermining of the redemptive character of the poem. Lines 9 and 10 of Césaire's poem suggest the possibility of such redemption by allying destruction with creativity. For the term 'craque' suggests the plenitude of the speaker's voice, which contains the potential for both destruction and new creation (implied by the multivalent term 'flamboyant'). In the German version, these lines are rendered: 'Dünne Finsternis red ich die stöhnt / im Schein der flammenden Städte'. The German verb 'stöhnt' does not reflect the sudden, cataclysmic nature of 'craque', nor the impression of the plenitude of the voice. Instead, 'stöhnen' suggests an inarticulate sound of suffering, and the impression that the burden of the past weighs heavily on the speaker.

Moreover, the adjective 'flammend' in 'Habt kein Erbarmen mit mir' reproduces only the suggestion of destruction contained in the French term 'flamboyant', thus reducing the positive associations of this phrase. The 'flammenden Städte' thereby take on overtones of firestorms resulting from the heavy bombardment of cities, and so allude to the Second World War. Furthermore, the implication of the verb 'stöhnen', that the effects of this past are not over but continue to weigh on the speaker, is intensified by the words 'im Schein der', for which there is no alternative in the original poem. By adding this phrase, Celan's version suggests the influence of this destruction beyond the bounds of the cities themselves, and perhaps even beyond temporal boundaries. While in the French poem the cities are an attribute of the voice, thus apparently under the speaker's control, in the German version the voice is outside these cities, groaning in their light.

The speaker's agency is thereby called into question, and the impression is not that this destruction is over, but that its effects continue to resonate in the present.

3 Semantic Shifts

As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the processes at work in Celan's translations is that of the 'semantic shift', which describes the semantic changes that certain linguistic terms undergo as a result of their use. Celan's treatment of Césaire's colonial poem provides compelling examples of the effect of semantic shifts. It has already been established that the lexical and syntactical changes made by Celan in his translations reduce the implicit triumph of Césaire's poem. In this context, the negative connotations of some of the images that appear in the original poem are rendered more immediate in the German version. These new connotations are therefore the result of semantic shifts, both in terms of the new meanings that certain words have taken on as a result of the Second World War and the Holocaust, and because the new, more muted, tone of the poem allows these connotations to emerge. For example, the image of smoke with which Celan's version begins is an example both of a lexical choice, in his rendering of 'fumez' as 'rauchet', and a semantic shift. The recontextualisation of these images in Celan's version reveals how their semantic properties have been altered by their involvement in the recent past. These points in the translations thus bear witness to this violation of language.

The image of the swamp's vapour is optimistic in Césaire's poem, since it indicates the potential for change: the swamps are not stagnant but are on the verge of erupting into activity. Thus, just as the description of cities as 'flamboyant' suggests both destruction and the possibility of new creation, so fetid, steaming marshes imply both danger and regeneration. A translation of the verb 'fumer' into German poses problems, since it

necessitates a semantic narrowing. In order to suggest the image of steaming swamps, on the point of eruption, the verb 'dampfen' is apposite.³⁷ By using instead the verb 'rauchen', Celan's version evokes fire and creates an unnatural image of smoking swamps. Celan's choice of that verb thus shifts the emphasis of the poem away from regeneration and towards destruction.

In 'Habt kein Erbarmen mit mir', Celan's alteration of the plural 'étoiles' to the singular 'Stern' evokes an image of individual death that is absent from the original poem. The post-Holocaust connotations of the German term then implicitly relate this death to the Holocaust. As Wiedemann notes, the emphasis of the phrase 'toter Stern' through enjambement, and the change of the 'étoiles' to the singular 'Stern', evokes Celan's Jewish heritage.³⁸ That is, as opposed to the unspecific and plural French 'étoiles mortes', the singular phrase 'toter Stern' also connotes the Jewish Star of David and therefore the suffering and deaths of Jews as a result of Nazi persecution. Celan's version of P  ret's poem 'Lundi' ('Montag') contains a similar moment. In the French poem, a smashed window simultaneously evokes stars, through the phrase 'vitre   toil  e' (a shattered pane). Since German does not allow such multivalency in this case, the image of the star takes on a different meaning in Celan's version: 'Et pareil    un   clat de verre qui s'est d  tach   d'une vitre   toil  e par un caillou / und dem Glassplitter gleich der aus der Scheibe sprang deren Stern ein Kieselstein war' (IV, 774-5). In the German version the single star image again evokes the Holocaust, and it is the star that shatters the glass, rather than simply the pebble as in the French version. The star is thus rendered violent and destructive in Celan's version, and the image of shattered glass is brought into the connotative realm of the Holocaust. For example, the attacks on synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses

³⁷ In another translation of C  saire's poem by Janheinz Jahn, the French verb 'fumer' is rendered 'dampfen'. See *Poesiealbum* 231. *Aim   C  saire*, ed. by Klaus Laabs (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1986), p. 4.

³⁸ Wiedemann, 'Surrealistische Publikationen', p. 133.

of the so-called *Reichskristallnacht* may be evoked by the juxtaposition of the star and shattered glass.

Similar semantic shifts are most evident in the final six lines of Celan's version of Césaire's poem:

et la pureté irrésistible de ma main appelle
de loin, de très loin, du patrimoine héréditaire
le zèle victorieux de l'acide dans la chair
de la vie – marais! –

telle une vipère née de la force blonde de
l'éblouissement.

So rein ist meine Hand daß nichts
ihr widersteht so ruft sie
aus fernstem Erbgut herbei den siegreichen Eifer
der Säure im Fleische des Lebens – o Sümpfe –

wie eine Otter von der blonden
Macht der Verblüffung
Geboren

The term 'patrimoine héréditaire' is positive in Césaire's poetic universe, since it reflects his concept of 'négritude'. The rhyming of 'patrimoine héréditaire' with 'la chair', coupled with the emphasis of this latter image through enjambement ('la chair / de la vie'), suggests a felicitous connection between heredity, the body, and life. While, in this context, the image of acid in the flesh may evoke the branding of slaves, Césaire's juxtaposition of this violent image with the emphasis on life and the evocation of victory also reclaims and subsumes it into the positive notion of shared ethnicity. But this

essentialist treatment of race, translated directly by Celan as ‘das Erbgut’, cannot have solely positive connotations in Celan’s poetic universe, scarred as it is by the memory of the racial persecution of Jews, which was based on precisely this concept of genetic inheritance. The German term ‘Erbgut’ originally designated inherited land, but became associated with genetics in early the twentieth century, coming to mean ‘genetic make-up’. However, the archaic implication of the term ‘Erbgut’ as referring to inherited land was taken up during the National Socialist regime as part of the ideological conviction that racial heritage was related to the right to occupy land.³⁹ This concern with racial heritage thereby retroactively impacts on the meaning of the phrase in line 12 of Celan’s version: ‘So rein ist meine Hand’. The Jewish poet’s assertion of his purity challenges the Nazi discourse on racial purity.

In this new context, the phrase ‘siegreichen Eifer’ takes on related historical connotations. This compound adjective may be split into two nouns, ‘Sieg’ and ‘Reich’, both heavy with meaning in the context of National Socialism. The juxtaposition of these terms with the image of corruption of the flesh by acid may also contain an echo of the tattooing of numbers onto concentration camp inmates’ arms; as well as of the acid used in the gassings in the death camps, namely the cyanide compound known as ‘Zyklon B’. The memory of this physical atrocity is thereby fused with Césaire’s positive evocation of shared racial heritage. A potential allusion to the National Socialist regime is also perceptible in the final stanza of Celan’s translation: ‘wie eine Otter von der blonden / Macht der Verblüffung / geboren’. The term ‘Macht’ narrows the meaning of the more general term ‘force’, in the original poem, locating the phrase in the semantic fields of politics and the military. As H.G. Adler has argued, the term ‘Macht’ became associated

³⁹ See ‘Erbgut’, in Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch. Neubearbeitung* (Stuttgart: Hirzel, 1999), VIII, 1599-1601. The most common contemporary translations of ‘le patrimoine héréditaire’ are ‘das Erbgut’ or ‘die Erbmasse’. See *Pons Großwörterbuch Französisch* (Stuttgart and Dresden: Klett, 1996), p. 547.

with aggression during the National Socialist period, as a result of terms such as ‘die Machtergreifung’.⁴⁰ When combined with the adjective ‘blonde’, this term also evokes Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of ‘die blonde Bestie’, which was adopted by the National Socialists to support their ideal of the blond Aryan.⁴¹ The phrase ‘die blonde Macht’ thereby takes on additional connotations as a result of the recent past, calling to mind the National Socialist ideology and persecution.

Two moments in Celan’s translation of Breton’s poem, ‘Guerre’, represent yet more striking instances of semantic shifts in the post-Holocaust context. Breton’s evocation of a birch forest may be read, in the context of the poem and its year of composition (1944), as a description of wartime partisan resistance: ‘dans le délié de ses bois de bouleaux où s’organise le guet’. Celan’s translation of this line reads: ‘im lockern Gehölz seiner Birken da wo man liegt und lauert’. It could be argued that the name of the National Socialist death camp, Birkenau, appears embedded as a series of fragments in this line: ‘Birken [...] lauert’.⁴² Thus, the image of birch trees now seems to resound with the unnatural deaths of the Holocaust, an ironic re-description of this natural image to which George Steiner alludes as follows: ‘*Birken-Buchen* – put an extra syllable on a German tree and what do you have?’⁴³

A similar moment occurs in Celan’s translation of Péret’s ‘Pour ne rien dire’ (IV, 768-769), also published in *Surrealistische Publikationen*. In this poem, Celan renders the line

⁴⁰ Adler, 214. See also the entry under ‘Machtergreifung’ in Berning, p. 126.

⁴¹ Crane Brinton, ‘The National Socialists’ use of Nietzsche’, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, I/ii (April 1940), 131-150 (p. 136). Nietzsche discusses his conception of ‘die blonde Bestie’ in his essay *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968-), VI/ii, 257-430 (p. 289).

⁴² Robert Vilain has identified a similar moment in Celan’s poem ‘A la pointe acérée’ (1961; I, 251). He argues that the name of the Nazi concentration camp ‘Buchenwald’ appears in that poem, suspended between the two words ‘Waldstunde’ and ‘Buchecke’, in lines 15 and 20. Vilain, ‘Celan and Hofmannsthal’, *Austrian Studies*, 12: *The Austrian Lyric* (2004), 172-95 (p. 193).

⁴³ Steiner, ‘A Note on Günter Grass’ (1964), in Steiner, *Language and Silence*, pp. 152-59 (p. 155).

‘que les draps de bouleau entre lesquels ton corps devient une volute de fumée’ as follows: ‘wie die Birkenlaken in denen dein Leib eine Rauchschncke wird’. The combination of the French phrase ‘les draps de bouleau’ with the evocation of a body turning into smoke takes on Holocaust connotations in the German version.⁴⁴ This connotation is further invited by Celan’s translation of ‘entre lesquels’ as ‘in denen’. The spatial division introduced by the French ‘entre’, suggesting a person sleeping between two sheets, is removed in the German version, where the figure’s body is not ‘between’ the sheets but ‘in’ the sheets. The impression that the body is wrapped in sheets is further implied by the evocation of a snail (‘Rauchschncke’). This wrapping suggests that the body may be enclosed in a death shroud, and indeed the use of the word ‘Leib’, instead of ‘Körper’, for ‘corps’, supports this implication. So in this version, as in ‘Krieg’, the term ‘Birken’ evokes both the tree and the concentration camp.

The subsequent line of Celan’s translation of ‘Guerre’ contains an image that likewise, in the context of Celan’s own poetry, evokes the Holocaust:

Dans les cordages de ses vaisseaux à la proue desquels plonge une femme que les
fatigues de l’amour ont parée d’un loup vert

Im Tauwerk seiner Schiffe an deren Bug eine Frau in die Wellen taucht
aufgeputzt mit einer grünen Maske die ihr die Ermüdungen der Liebe schenkten

The word ‘Bug’ is a direct translation of ‘la proue’ (the bow of a ship), yet Celan has made a syntactic alteration to create the phrase ‘an deren Bug eine Frau in die Wellen taucht’. This juxtaposition of the noun ‘Bug’ with a woman diving into waves bears a

⁴⁴ Pennone (p. 113) points out that this image in Péret’s poem of a body turning into smoke may have determined Celan’s choice of that poem for translation (if he indeed had a choice), since it reflects the biographical background of the Holocaust and in particular its thematisation in ‘Todesfuge’ (1945; I, 41-42). But she does not note that Celan’s alteration of this image renders the evocation of a burning body and a death shroud more immediate.

striking resemblance to the first couplet of a poem that Celan had written during the war: 'Kennt noch das Wasser des südlichen Bug, / Mutter, die Welle, die Wunden dir schlug?' (1944; VI, 136). This poem, entitled 'Nähe der Gräber', alludes to the death of Celan's mother in a concentration camp on the banks of the river Bug, in Nazi-occupied Ukraine.⁴⁵ Thus, in Celan's poetic universe, the word 'Bug', as both common and proper noun, becomes emblematic for the death of his mother and so for the wider destruction wrought by the Holocaust. Its appearance in this translation of Breton's poem inserts these connotations.

The lines cited above occur at a key point in Breton's poem 'Guerre', in that the poem's subject, the beast of war, suddenly appears to turn towards the speaker: 'J'ai cru que la Bête se tournait vers moi'. Until this point the poem's speaker has observed the phenomenon of war, but has not participated. The only personal moment in the French poem is thus rendered equally so in Celan's translation, yet brings with it a new set of associations. The way in which the aggressive beast comes to engage the speaker is intensified by Celan's insertion of these apparent allusions to the Holocaust and to his own experience. Breton's experience of war is thereby fused with Celan's own experience of war and atrocity.

4 Conclusion

Celan's versions of the surrealist poems under discussion here may thus be designated 'post-catastrophic' since they infuse the original poems with an impression of destruction and suffering. In Césaire's case, this desire for a cataclysmic moment of new creation is anchored in his colonial context; and the catastrophe that he desires is therefore in part the final liberation of the former slaves from their continuing oppression. By contrast,

⁴⁵ See Felstiner, p. 15 and pp. 23-24. Celan returned to this image in his poem 'Es ist alles anders' (1962/63; I, 284), in the punning phrase: 'am Heck kein Warum, am Bug kein Wohin'. Ibid., p. 195.

Celan's poetic language is post-cataclysmic since it contains the memory of the Holocaust and so reflects the notion that reality impacts on language.

This idea of linguistic violation is central to Celan's poetics, and indeed Celan's version of Césaire's poem also intersects with Celan's poetological writings. For example, he suggests in 'Edgar Jené' (1948) that language has been altered by the past, principally through the interlocutor's claim that the speaker insists on remaining in dialogue with 'den finstern Quellen'. In view of this image, his version of Césaire's poem takes on a further poetological tone, for the line 'Dünne Finsternis red ich die stöhnt' implies a connection between the darkness and the speaker's language. Rather than the speaker's voice being 'obscure', as the French poem suggests, in Celan's version the speaking subject creates the darkness. The verb 'stöhnen' also resonates with Celan's poetics in the light of 'Edgar Jené', for in that text, the speaker depicts current language as 'Worte [...] [die] unter der tausendjährigen Last falscher und entstellter Aufrichtigkeit stöhnten' (III, 157). Here, an allusion to the Third Reich may be evident in the term 'tausendjährig', since it recalls the National Socialist promise to initiate a *Tausendjähriges Reich*. In the context of this myriad of connotations, Celan's phrase in his version of Césaire's poem, 'Dünne Finsternis die stöhnt / im Schein der flammenden Städte' figures as a poetic representation of this linguistic concept.

To use Stewart's terminology, Césaire's aesthetics are therefore pre-catastrophic, while Celan's are post-catastrophic. The result of these two approaches meeting in the new version of Césaire's poem is a sustained tension between two modes of expression. These modes are not sequential or hierarchical, whereby the later version negates the former one. Rather, the modes appear to stand in a dialectical relationship. In Celan's version of Césaire's poem, the French poet's optimistic expression of the desire for

liberation is not closed off by the darker allusiveness of the German language. Instead, the two sets of referents co-exist and interact with one another. This dialectical relationship perhaps suggests that, in the post-Holocaust era, the optimism such as that contained in Césaire's poem can no longer be separated from events (in this case, the Holocaust) that threaten to devalue it altogether. The negative allusions in the German poem, which result both from Celan's lexical and syntactical choices and from the semantic shifts that the German language has undergone, combine with the original poem's positive referents to produce a synchronic discourse whereby the positive can no longer exist without its negative counterpart. The issue of genetic heritage ('patrimoine héréditaire' / 'Erbgut') in these poems provides the most remarkable example of this tension, as Césaire's positive concept of shared ethnicity is inscribed with the post-Holocaust knowledge of the destruction of human life according to perceived racial qualities.

The simultaneous existence of two forms of expression can also be conceptualised as a tension between metaphorical and non-metaphorical modes. While Césaire's poem takes its allusive quality largely from metaphors, Celan's version also indicates the non-metaphorical meanings that co-exist with the figurative language. The image of fire is the clearest example of this tension between abstract and concrete imagery. The fire imagery in Césaire's poem is abstracted by the multiple meanings of the adjective 'flamboyant', and the ambiguity of the verb 'fumer' (both 'to smoke' and 'to steam'). By contrast, Celan's version, with the adjective 'flammend' and the verb 'rauchen', also evokes the non-metaphorical aspect of these images of fire, connoting destruction more directly. Celan's version thus restores to many of Césaire's images their literal meaning: smoke represents not only hope for renewal but also devastation; and the cities are not only bursting with energy but are also consumed by flames.

While Césaire's poem applies abstract meanings to its concrete images, Celan's rendering reverses this process, applying concrete meanings to the abstract images. This emphasis on the non-metaphorical layer of the poem has implications for an understanding both of Celan's treatment of metaphor, as well as of his relationship to surrealist aesthetics. A resistance to metaphor, and its potential to mask reality, is implied, and this suggests a hesitation regarding the potential unreality of surrealist metaphor. The fact that these images have taken on new meanings also illustrates the concept of communication between different levels of signification, which is articulated in 'Edgar Jené' and in *Les Vases communicants*. So while Celan's translation may in one respect be interpreted as a warning against the tendency in some surrealist poetry to use metaphors that veil rather than extend an awareness of reality, it also demonstrates that language holds within itself the potential to take on additional meanings. In this case, the memory of the Holocaust is retroactively inscribed into the original poem and so renders the new version both the same as and different from the original. As the following chapter shows, this relationship between identity and difference became a thematic tension when Celan again translated surrealist poetry in the late 1950s.

Chapter 6

‘Der Schatten Schatten sein’: Celan’s Encounter with Robert Desnos

Celan’s active engagement with the poetry of the French, sometime surrealist, poet Robert Desnos (1900-45) appears to have begun as the result of a commission to translate two of his poems. On 16 July 1957, Celan’s acquaintance Flora Klee-Palyi (1892-1961), a Hungarian-born editor and translator, wrote to Celan asking him to translate into German two poems by Desnos (‘L’Épitaphe’ and ‘Le Dernier poème’) for an anthology of French poetry.¹ Two days after Klee-Palyi sent the letter with this translation request, it seems that Celan acquired a copy of *Domaine public* (1953), an anthology of Desnos’s poems published posthumously, since Celan noted the date ‘18.7.57’ on the inside cover of that volume.² *Domaine public* contains Desnos’s collections *Corps et biens* (1930) and *Fortunes* (1942) as well as a selection from other publications by Desnos, and includes both ‘L’Épitaphe’ (1944) and ‘Le Dernier poème’ (1945).³ Celan’s engagement with Desnos’s poetry thus appears to arise from this translation commission, rather than vice versa. As such, the annotations in his volume of Desnos’s poetry may be read in conjunction with his translation of Desnos’s poems.

¹ The anthology (1958) was a revised edition of *Anthologie der französischen Dichtung von Nerval bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Flora Klee-Palyi, 2 vols (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1950/53). Klee-Palyi had first written to Celan in 1949, asking if he was interested in contributing any translations to that first anthology. However, the first edition did not contain any versions by Celan. Celan’s own copy of the second edition is held in the DLA. Klee-Palyi’s letters to Celan are also in the DLA: D 90.1.1760/1 (for the letter of 8 June 1949) and D 90.1.1760/4 (for the letter of 16 July 1957). Celan completed the translations and sent them to Klee-Palyi within a very short space of time, which is evident from the fact that she wrote on 21 July 1957, only five days after her original letter, thanking him for the successful translations.

² Desnos, *Domaine public* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953). Celan’s copy of this book is held in the DLA.

³ As is explained later in this chapter, the dating of ‘Le Dernier poème’ as 1945 is contentious.

This chapter demonstrates that Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry is defined by images of ghosts and shades, which combine to form a compelling impression of the association of poetry with spectral doubles. Such blurring of boundaries between otherwise discrete elements is characteristic of surrealist theory, as it is represented in particular by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*. When read in the light of these images of spectral doubles, I show that Celan's version of Desnos's 'Le Dernier poème' takes on metapoetic associations, representing the nature of translation itself as such a double figure. This analysis of Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry thus advances an understanding of Celan's poetics of translation, suggesting that the poetics may be generated in part by his recontextualisation of surrealist features. Before the theme of the spectre is explored, Desnos and his poetics will be introduced.

1 Robert Desnos: Biography and Poetics

Desnos was born in Paris in 1900. By 1922, initially through his friendship with the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, he had become an active member of the Parisian Dadaist and surrealist group under André Breton. In these early years of the movement, Desnos was a central figure within the surrealist movement, praised by Breton for his success in so-called automatic writing. He is said to have written many works while in a state of apparent hypnosis. From 1925-30, Desnos's poetry was influenced by his unrequited love for the Belgian singer and actress Yvonne George, and his poems consequently centred on the themes of love and solitude. Three of the poems that resulted from this failed relationship will be discussed in more detail below, as they are relevant to an understanding of Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry: 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' (1926),

'Jamais d'autre que toi' (1927) and Desnos's longest poem, 'The Night of loveless nights' (1930).⁴

During the late 1920s Desnos gradually distanced himself from Breton's surrealist movement until a definitive rupture in 1929, which resulted largely from Desnos's rejection of Communism, at the time a central feature of the French surrealist movement.⁵ In addition, Desnos became impatient with what he perceived as the authoritarian nature of Bretonian surrealism.⁶ In 1929 Desnos met and fell in love with Youki Foujita, and this requited love coincided with his rejection of the surrealist movement, both developments thus bringing about a shift in his aesthetics.⁷ During the 1930s, Desnos became involved in intellectual anti-fascist movements, and his original pacifism was replaced by a fervent desire to defeat Nazism. This engagement culminated in his participation in the Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France, and his consequent arrest by the Gestapo in February 1944. In April of that year, Desnos was deported to Auschwitz and then to a series of other concentration camps, arriving finally in Theresienstadt in May 1945. He died there of typhus the following month, shortly after the liberation of the camp.

⁴ 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', *Œuvres*, p. 539; 'Jamais d'autre que toi', *ibid.*, p. 563; 'The Night of loveless nights', *ibid.*, pp. 904-21.

⁵ In 1927, Desnos did not join Breton, Aragon, Péret and Éluard in their membership of the French Communist Party, nor did he sign the expression of commitment to Communism in the brochure *À grand jour*. See *ibid.*, pp. 1360-62.

⁶ Desnos's frustration was signalled by his response to a circular letter from Breton to the surrealists in February 1929 asking for their views on the efficacy of communal activity. Part of Desnos's reply read: 'En définitive et dans les cas impossibles à déterminer à l'avance, je ne renonce pas à collaborer à une activité commune mais je me refuse à accepter des mots d'ordre et une discipline par trop souvent arbitraire.' Cited in Breton, *À suivre* (1929), in *Œuvres complètes*, I, 965. In March 1929, Desnos refused an invitation to a surrealist meeting organised by Breton and Aragon, and in December of that year, Breton's 'Second manifeste du surréalisme' explicitly excluded Desnos from the surrealist movement. See Desnos, *Œuvres*, pp. 1360-62.

⁷ Lucie Badoud was called 'Youki' by her partner (and husband as of January 1929), the artist Tsuguhara Foujita, with whom she had an open relationship. This nickname was subsequently used by all her friends and acquaintances, including Desnos. Tsuguhara Foujita left Paris for Japan in late 1931, and Desnos and Youki began to live together. However, Youki was unable to obtain a divorce from Foujita until after Desnos's death, and so they never married. See Katharine Conley, *Robert Desnos, Surrealism, and the Marvelous in Everyday Life* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 57, pp. 70-74 and p. 237; and Desnos, *Œuvres*, pp. 1361-63.

With regard to Desnos's work, the difficulty related to classifying poets as 'surrealist', discussed in Chapter 1, is reflected in the range of critical responses to the surrealist aspect of his poems. Michel Murat argues that *Deuil pour deuil* (1924), a collection of short prose passages, is Desnos's only truly surrealist work, since it was the only one to be published in the programmatic journal *La Révolution surréaliste* (December 1924).⁸ Yet Murat also contends that almost all of Desnos's writing between 1922 and 1924 could be described as 'l'automatisme psychique pur' (the phrase that Breton used in 1924 to define Surrealism).⁹ Mary Ann Caws argues, as she tends to do for all the poets who were at any point part of Breton's surrealist movement, that Desnos remained a surrealist to some extent until his death. She states that Desnos's examination of the relationship between dream and reality, a fundamental strand of Breton's original conception of surrealism in his first manifesto, was more prolonged and significant than that of any other surrealist poet.¹⁰ The fluid nature of any attempted definition of surrealism is evident in Caws's assertion that even after the break with Breton, Desnos always considered himself a surrealist according to his own definition of the term: to be a 'believer in one unique reality'.¹¹

One evaluation of Desnos's poems on which all critics seem to agree is the distinct impression of an explicit relationship to reality. Caws claims that Desnos viewed even so-called abstract art as 'concrete', since it can be fully comprehended as a reflection of the artist's mindset.¹² For example, in an article published in Georges Bataille's journal *Documents* (1930), Desnos asserts that the elementary goal of all art, of all expression, and

⁸ Desnos, *Deuil pour deuil*, in *Œuvres*, pp. 193-220.

⁹ Michel Murat, *Robert Desnos. Les grands jours du poète* (Paris: Corti, 1988), pp. 33-35.

¹⁰ Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 179.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

indeed of all human activity is to render things in a concrete form.¹³ Such a view bears a striking resemblance to Celan's distinction between abstract and concrete poetry in his conversation with an acquaintance, Hugo Huppert, in 1966. According to Huppert's account of that discussion, Celan asserted that his poetry is concrete because it engages with and reflects all facets of reality.¹⁴ Such an identification of parallels between Celan's and Desnos's poetics does not indicate that Celan's poetics were directly influenced by Desnos's, but highlights a convergence of ideas that invites further investigation into the two sets of aesthetics.

Since this thesis explores Celan's engagement with surrealist poems, his translation of 'L'Építaphe' will not be examined in detail. This poem, written in 1944, belongs to the period after Desnos had broken with Breton's movement. And as the brief analysis of 'L'Építaphe' later in this chapter demonstrates, it is associated more with Desnos's war-time political activity than with the aesthetics of surrealism.¹⁵ By contrast, the poems annotated by Celan in his copies of *Domaine public* and of a re-issued edition of *Corps et biens* (1968) stem from Desnos's surrealist period. Thus Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry is significant in three respects: firstly, because of a shared connection to the past, for Klee-Palyi had, like Desnos, been interned in Theresienstadt during the war, and so the experience of Nazi persecution creates a biographical link between the original poet, the editor and the translator; secondly as a witness to Celan's reception of particular

¹³ Desnos, 'La ligne générale', *Documents*, 4 (1930), 217-21. This article discusses the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, and in particular his 1929 film 'La ligne générale'.

¹⁴ Hugo Huppert, "Spirituell". Ein Gespräch mit Paul Celan', in Werner Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus (eds), *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 319-24 (p. 320).

¹⁵ Celan's translation of 'L'Építaphe' has been analysed by Harbusch, in *Gegenübersetzungen. Paul Celans Übertragungen französischer Symbolisten* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2005), pp. 149-50, and briefly in her essay on Celan's translations of poems by Desnos and by Jules Supervielle, "Begegnungen im Gedicht" – Robert Desnos and Jules Supervielle', in Gellhaus (ed.), *Fremde Nähe*, pp. 555-68 (pp. 557-58).

features of surrealism; and thirdly as an important contribution to a theory of Celan's translation work.¹⁶

2 Celan's Reception of Desnos's Poetry: The Spectre

In addition to *Domaine public*, Celan owned a copy of *Deuil pour deuil* (1924) and a re-issued edition of Desnos's volume *Corps et bien*, published in 1968. Celan has written the phrase 'Als Fragment in die Sammlung Übersetzungen' next to a short passage in his copy of *Deuil pour deuil*.¹⁷ It is likely that this annotation refers either to Celan's intention to publish a collection of his own translations of French poetry, or to his plan to edit a volume of translations into German from several languages and by several translators. However, as Harbusch explains, neither of these projects came to fruition, and indeed a draft translation of this passage by Desnos has not been found among Celan's papers.¹⁸ Celan also wrote a translation of the first stanza of Desnos's poem 'The Night of loveless nights' (1930; 904-21) into his copy of *Domaine public*. In addition, he pencilled a diagonal line in the margin of the poems 'Apparition' (1934; 922) and 'Fête-Diable' (1934; 930-31), and wrote the following on the final, blank, page of the book: 's. 239 (apparition) / 253 (fête-diable (?))'. Finally, in Celan's copy of *Corps et bien* there is a blue ink mark in the margin next to the poem 'Jamais d'autre que toi' (1930; 563-64), and that poem's page number is noted in ink on the final page of the book.¹⁹ These marks and notes suggest that Celan read these particular poems, and perhaps that he considered translating them.

¹⁶ Harbusch (*Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 123) suggests that Klee-Palyi's choice of these particular poems by Desnos may result in part from her own background, as a Jewish victim of Nazi persecution.

¹⁷ The annotated passage from *Deuil pour deuil* reads: "Ci-gît celui dont la parole avait la forme des grandes fleurs septentrionales et qui retint dans ses bras robustes la fauve et délirante maîtresse, la femme rouge comme le Rouge et le corail qui est bleu en réalité mais auquel, en raison même de son attitude torturée, la profondeur de la poésie confère cette couleur propre à l'excitation des taureaux." Desnos, *Œuvres*, p. 219.

¹⁸ Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, pp. 129-30 and pp. 138-47.

¹⁹ The page references in parentheses are to Desnos, *Œuvres*.

These poems by Desnos that were marked by Celan all evoke images of shades or shadows ('ombres') and phantoms or phantasms ('fantômes'). These spectral themes can be divided into three main categories: firstly, poems in which the speaker addresses the reader from beyond the grave, which represent the shade as a ghost; secondly, poems which appear to thematise their own insubstantial quality, in that they articulate their origins in dream and automatic writing; and thirdly, poems in which the speaker addresses a figure who exists in his dream or desire, to whom he refers as an 'ombre' and a 'fantôme'. All of these themes have in common the evocation of the insubstantial double of a substantial figure. That substantial figure is therefore both present, in that it is indicated by the phantom, and absent, in that it is neither explicitly represented nor addressed in the poem. Such an absent presence may be imagined as a shadow, which is the insubstantial double of the figure that casts it, but which also connotes death through its proximity to the term 'shade' and that word's association with ghosts and the underworld. The term 'spectre' encompasses all of the meanings suggested by these varying images of shades, shadows and ghosts, in that it can refer to 'an apparition, phantom or ghost'; 'a faint shadow or imitation of something'; or 'an image or phantom produced by reflection or other natural cause'.²⁰ All of these definitions indeed suggest that the spectre represents the insubstantial double of a substantial form or figure, and as such is simultaneously absent and present. For this reason, I shall refer throughout this discussion to the doubles in Desnos's poems as 'spectres'.

The first category of spectral poem in Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry is represented by 'L'Épitaphe', in which the speaker addresses the reader from beyond the grave.²¹ This sonnet both confirms and transcends death. The speaker's death is implicit

²⁰ 'Spectre', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 167-68.

²¹ Desnos, 'L'Épitaphe', in *Œuvres*, p. 1175.

in the opening phrase, 'j'ai vécu', and confirmed by the poem's designation as an epitaph, and by the phrase 'je suis mort' in the second line. Yet the insistence of the first person pronoun throughout the poem seems to deny the fact of this death, since the voice continues to speak. This impression of communication from beyond the grave becomes more compelling through the invocation of addressees in the third stanza. The sonnet thus becomes a form of address, yet conversely it is those who are alive ('vous qui vivez') who are absent from the poem, in that they do not answer the questions posed by the speaker. The dead speaker is therefore more present than the living addressees, his insistent monologue leaving no space for the addressees' response. This affirmation of the speaker's continued influence over the living renders the whole sonnet an assertion of identity beyond the grave. However, at the same time the speaker is spectral in that he is an illusory conceit, the insubstantial form of the poet's voice.

The poems 'Apparition' and 'Fête-Diable' both have metapoetic overtones, depicting the poem as emerging from dream and so evoke a second kind of spectral presence.²² 'Apparition' is created through internal association, in that each line of the poem is generated through the association of images in the previous lines. The poem does not depict a spectral figure, but rather proves to be as insubstantial as a spectre itself, in that it thematises its own automatic structure. So the first lines may be read as the description of the automatic poem itself, which represents creativity borne from a raw state: 'né de la boue'. This potential reading is rendered most compelling by the phrase 'jailli du sommeil' (line 2), which suggests the composition of poetry while in a hypnotic trance.²³ The poem is therefore indeed a spectral 'apparition': it appears seemingly from nowhere, and has no external substance beyond that which it confers upon itself.

²² The poems are printed in full in the appendices.

²³ Dumas describes automatic writing as the ability to 'saisir à la source *le jaillissement* de la parole libérée des contraintes de la conscience'. Dumas, 'Rêves. Sommeils hypnotiques', in Desnos, *Œuvres*, p. 122 (my emphasis).

The poem 'Fête-Diable' confers a similar sense of the transience and insubstantial nature of poetry through its apparent suggestion of a dream narrative that is suddenly interrupted when the sleeper awakes ('le dormeur s'éveille', line 31). A traveller figure moves through the poem, perhaps representing the dreamer himself, who treks along an illuminated path through the darkness of sleep: 'la route blanche, dans la campagne noire' (line 8). As such the poem ends on a triumphant celebration of the ubiquity of dream, which takes the form of 'milliers de routes blanches tracées par le monde / A travers les campagnes ténébreuses'. Yet when the real subject of the poem – that is, the subject that exists in waking reality – is briefly introduced in line 31, the traveller is revealed to be a spectral dream-figure:

Et le dormeur s'éveille.
Voit la goutte briller de cent mille rubis dans le verre
La contemple.
L'univers oscille durant une seconde de silence

The presence of the traveller, whose actions the reader follows throughout the poem, is thus hollowed out from within, until he becomes merely one of the thousands of such shadows that pass through the dreams of the world. He exists only in sleeping reality, so that his presence is rendered undeniable within this narrative, and yet transient and insubstantial when placed in the context of the thousands of dreams happening simultaneously. The spectral figures in 'Apparition' and 'Fête-Diable' thus both have poetological connotations, suggesting a thematisation of the dream narratives and automatic writing that defined early surrealism.

The third category of spectral figure in Celan's reception of Desnos's poems is that of the addressee who exists only in the speaker's dream or as an expression of his desire. These poems are pervaded by the impression of absence and loss, made palpable by the apparent presence of an addressee who ultimately proves to be illusory. The Desnos scholar Adelaïde M. Russo identifies such a spectral presence in the repeated refrains of many of Desnos's poems. Her principal example for this haunting rhetorical figure is the repeated line 'Jamais d'autre que toi' in the poem of the same name.²⁴ These insistent repetitions reflect both an absence and a presence: the monological aspect of these lines (they are not provided with any response within the poem) throws into relief the absence of the addressee; yet at the same time these repeated addresses suggest the existence of an other. 'The Night of loveless nights' has a similarly monological tone, as it depicts a series of apparent dialogues between the speaker and a phantom, who appears in a mirror, and between the speaker and his apparent doubles, a dead man and a condemned prisoner.²⁵ These dialogues are illusory, however, since the speaker's exclamations and exhortations do not receive any response, and consequently the interlocutors are rendered insubstantial and mysterious and the poem remains a monologue.

These sets of spectral images all inhabit a third space: the dream blurs the boundaries between sleep and waking; and the spectre is a liminal figure between life and death,

²⁴ Adelaïde M. Russo, 'Le Tombeau de Robert ou la tradition encryptée', in Dumas (ed.), *Moi qui suis Robert Desnos. Permanence d'une Voix* (Paris: Corti, 1987), pp. 33-54 (p. 52). Desnos, 'Jamais d'autre que toi', in *Œuvres*, p. 563. This poem is printed in the appendices.

²⁵ Desnos's poem 'The Night of loveless nights' is too long to be printed in full here or in the appendices. However, the first stanza, of which Celan noted a translation on p. 215 of his copy of *Domaine public*, reads: 'Nuit putride et glaciale, épouvantable nuit, / Nuit du fantôme infirme et des plante pourries, / Incandescente nuit, flame et feu dans les puits, / Ténèbres sans éclairs, mensonges et roueries.' Desnos, *Œuvres*, p. 904. Celan's translation of this stanza suggests a preoccupation with the final phrase: 'mensonges et roueries'. Celan notes two different possible translations: 'rings Lug und Trug' and 'Lug, Trug und Gleisneri'. His notebook for this period also contains this phrase and the translation 'Lug, Trug und Gleisneri' (DLA: D 90.1.497). The preoccupation with this term may be understood to reflect his obsession with duplicity and hypocrisy during the late 1950s, as a result of the so-called Goll Affair. This translated phrase may thus be understood to bring together Desnos's poetry with Celan's particular circumstances, and to add hypocrisy to the original connotations of Desnos's phrase.

simultaneously present and absent. Likewise, the shadow is an empty space that nevertheless confirms the existence of the physical figure that casts it. These interpretations of Desnos's poems inform an analysis of Celan's translation of 'Le Dernier poème', since this version seems to thematise the spectral quality of the poem itself and in particular of the translation. The conception of the spectral double generated by these readings of Desnos's poems thus contributes to a conceptualisation of the metapoetic nature of Celan's translation work. A connection between translation and the evocation of a spectre has been suggested by two theorists of Celan's translations: Henriette Beese and Hans-Jost-Frey.²⁶ These two sets of theories will therefore be considered, followed by an examination of how the concept of the spectre can inform an interpretation of Celan's reception of Desnos's poetry.

3 The Translation as Spectre

Hans-Jost Frey's study of intertextuality and translation provides a fruitful model for conceptualising Celan's translation theory in general, and in particular for an interpretation of Celan's translation of Desnos's 'Le Dernier poème'. Frey's theory of intertextuality states that intertextual relationships are at the core of any text's meaning.²⁷ The meaning of a text evolves when it enters into a new context, which occurs, for example, every time the text is read, interpreted, debated, parodied or translated.²⁸ Consequently, the text endures by entering into new relationships; yet it is also changed by those relationships. Particularly significant are the text's relationships with other texts,

²⁶ Henriette Beese, *Nachdichtung als Erinnerung: Allegorische Lektüre einiger Gedichte von Paul Celan* (Darmstadt: Agora, 1976); and Hans-Jost Frey, *Der unendliche Text* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990).

²⁷ This understanding of the poem's relationship to other texts has also been addressed by Harold Bloom, in his well-known study *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) and by Julia Kristeva in her treatise *Semiotiké*, in which she states that modernist poetic texts 'se font en absorbant et en détruisant les autres textes de l'espace textuel. [...] Le texte poétique est produit dans le mouvement complexe d'une affirmation et d'une négation simultanées d'un autre texte.' Kristeva, *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), p. 257.

²⁸ Frey, p. 20.

and above all the translation, since this not only changes the original's meaning but also its very wording.²⁹

Two aspects of Frey's discussion of translation are particularly significant in the context of Celan's own translations. Firstly, Frey argues that, when viewed in parallel, an original text and its translation form a third text that is constituted of the relationship between the original and the translation. Crucially, this relationship is only evident to readers who are privileged with having both texts in front of them at the same time.³⁰ This third text is consequently not subordinate to the will of any author but is contingent on the particular relationship between the two texts and the reader.³¹ Frey considers Shakespeare's Sonnet 137 and its translation by Celan to exemplify this intertextual relationship between the two texts by showing how both poems thematise the translation process itself.³² He designates this thematisation a third space, since it only exists as a result of the interaction between the English and German versions of the poem.³³ For example, Frey considers that the translation process is thematised in Celan's version of sonnet 137 in the phrase 'Lügen-Leide', for 'false plague' (line 14). He argues that the connection between deceit and suffering suggested by this German compound becomes meaningful

²⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

³⁰ This privilege of access to parallel texts was afforded to readers of Celan's versions of Shakespeare's sonnets, since they were published in parallel in William Shakespeare, *Einundzwanzig Sonette. Deutsch von Paul Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1967); and since 1983 to any reader of Celan's translations in his *Gesammelte Werke*, where they are all published in parallel: Celan, *Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden*, ed. by Bodo Allemann, Stefan Reichert and Rolf Bücher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983).

³¹ Frey, p. 43.

³² Frey's analysis of Celan's translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 137 is reprinted as 'The Relation between Translation and Original as Text [The Example of Celan's Version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 137]', translated by Georgia Albert in collaboration with the author, in Aris Fioretos (ed.), *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 345-352. See V, 356-57 for Shakespeare's Sonnet 137 and Celan's version.

³³ The example given by Frey of the thematisation of the translation process in the original Sonnet 137 is the term 'common place'. He perceives a latent meaning in the term, in that if something is 'commonplace', it must therefore be transferable ('übertragbar') from one individual's speech into another's. Frey thus concludes that this point in the original sonnet indicates its own condition of being translatable. Frey, p. 49. Frey's identification of a latent self-reflexive meaning in the term 'commonplace' can be aligned with Peter Szondi's interpretation of Celan's version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105, discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

in the context of the poem's status as a translation.³⁴ For the speaker of a translation, its lyrical *Ich*, must ascribe to himself the same experiences, feelings and thoughts as the speaker of the original poem, despite the fact that these emotions are not his own. Consequently, when the translation and the original poem are read together, the translator's deceit in this respect becomes evident: 'Das Ich der Übersetzung tut nur so, als wäre es das Ich des Originals.'³⁵ Therefore the phrase 'Lügen-Leide' refers to an attribute that the translating subject can claim for themselves alone: the suffering brought about by the deceit inherent in the position of translator.³⁶

This suggestion that the translation is a deceitful version of the original text parallels Frey's consideration of Friedrich Schleiermacher's translation theory (1813), which precedes his analysis of Celan's translation.³⁷ Frey notes that Schleiermacher introduces the image of ghosts and *Doppelgänger* into his theory of translation, since he suggests that a translation that attempts to appear as if it were an original text causes confusion as to which is the original and which the translation. The translation thus appears as the original's uncanny *Doppelgänger* or spectre.³⁸ As Frey notes, even if one assumes that the original and the translation are attempting to say the same thing, then this shared meaning is nevertheless different in the translation precisely because it is not, and can never be, the original.³⁹ So the translation is represented as a repetition of the original

³⁴ Frey, p. 46.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

³⁶ Although Frey does not make the connection explicit, this aspect of his theory recalls the notion of the translator as betrayer, alluded to by Roman Jakobson in his essay 'On linguistic aspects of translation' (1959), in *Selected Writings II. Word and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 260-66 (p. 266). As Beese argues in her discussion of this concept, the notion of betrayal only figures if it is thought that the translator's aim is to convey the message of the original text by finding equivalent terms in the target language. Beese, p. 25.

³⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens' [sic] (1813), in *Sämtliche Werke*, 3 vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1838), III/ii, 207-45.

³⁸ Frey, pp. 34-35. The notion that the simultaneous familiarity and strangeness of the translation renders it an uncanny *Doppelgänger* parallels Sigmund Freud's theory of the Uncanny. See Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, XII, 227-68.

³⁹ Frey, p. 42.

text in a different form, and therefore is simultaneously the same as and different from that original.

In Beese's study of selected poems and translations by Celan, all of which she characterises as 'Nachdichtung' either because they are translations or because they rework elements of existing works by other poets or artists, she also perceives a disjuncture between repetition and identity. Beese states that any remembrance, in the form of *Nachdichtung*, of a deceased individual or of an earlier text cannot reproduce that previous life but only the appearance of a life ('ein Scheinleben').⁴⁰ Likewise if, as Celan suggests in his Büchner Prize Speech, a poem 'schreibt sich von einem Datum her', then the date to which it points back is a time that it can never reach (III, 196). Consequently, Beese argues that the poem recalls something past that only exists in the present as 'Schein' and 'Schatten', and so the poem becomes illusion and shadow itself.⁴¹ Beese identifies such an impression of illusion in Celan's poetry in his tendency to create images that suggest the existence of meaning, while simultaneously refusing to provide any firm definition.

Beese therefore aligns Celan's poetry with the tradition of so-called hermetic poetry from the nineteenth century onwards by stating that the 'absolute' metaphor of that genre of poetry should be called 'Scheinmetapher' or 'Als-ob-Metapher', since this term adequately describes these metaphors' ambivalent relationship to meaning. Beese argues that, on one hand, the metaphors do not seek to convey one fixed meaning, but on the other hand that they are not entirely free of signification (which would render them 'absolute'). Rather, these metaphors encourage the reader to seek meanings and give the

⁴⁰ Beese, p. 215.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 199.

impression that there are always further hidden meanings to be uncovered.⁴² Beese maintains that such a form of metaphor ('Scheinmetaphorik') is created in Celan's oeuvre by his tendency to transform adjectives into nouns or even names, and so to suggest that these images refer to something substantial and concrete, which nevertheless ultimately proves to be indefinable. The example given by Beese for this phenomenon is the phrase 'wo Schön am schönsten war', from Celan's rendering of Shakespeare's sonnet 106 (V, 347), whereby the capitalisation of the adjective 'Schön' suggests a substance that ultimately proves to be illusory.⁴³

4 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi'

Such an indication of presence, which is subsequently hollowed out to create a tension between absence and presence, is reflected in the representation of dreams and phantoms in Desnos's poetry, and in particular in those poems marked by Celan in his copies of Desnos's poems. Desnos's poem 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' addresses a similarly insubstantial, absent-present figure, as well as evoking dream, and so contains features that recall all the poems discussed thus far. However, Celan did not mark this poem in his volumes of Desnos's poetry, so there is no evidence that he considered translating it. Nevertheless, a reading of this poem provides essential background to Celan's translation of 'Le Dernier poème', since that poem is a variation on the final lines of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', as outlined below. Before addressing that translation, 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' will be analysed, in order to establish a basis for comparison:

J'ai tant rêvé de toi que tu perds ta réalité.

Est-il encore temps d'atteindre ce corps vivant et de baiser sur cette bouche la
naissance de la voix qui m'est chère?

J'ai tant rêvé de toi que mes bras habitués en étreignant ton ombre à se croiser

⁴² Ibid., p. 206.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 207.

sur ma poitrine ne se plieraient pas au contour de ton corps, peut-être.
Et que, devant l'apparence réelle de ce qui me hante et me gouverne depuis
des jours et des années, je deviendrais une ombre sans doute.

O balances sentimentales.

J'ai tant rêvé de toi qu'il n'est plus temps sans doute que je m'éveille. Je dors
debout, le corps exposé à toutes les apparences de la vie et de l'amour
et toi, la seule qui compte aujourd'hui pour moi, je pourrais moins
toucher ton front et tes lèvres que les premières lèvres et le premier front
venu.

J'ai tant rêvé de toi, tant marché, parlé, couché avec ton fantôme qu'il ne me
reste plus peut-être, et pourtant, qu'à être fantôme parmi les fantômes et
plus ombre cent fois que l'ombre qui se promène et se promènera
allègrement sur le cadran solaire de ta vie.

The existence of the addressee at the beginning of this poem is rendered palpable by the references to 'ta réalité', 'ce corps vivant' and 'cette bouche'. However, the relationship takes place wholly in the unreal realm of dream, and the addressee's existence is called into question by the fact that she has no name and fails to respond to the speaker. As such, the addressee takes on a double identity. She is both herself, to which the speaker appears to have no access, and a spectral presence, which is the manifestation with which the speaker communes: 'J'ai tant rêvé, [...] couché avec ton fantôme'. The contrast between presence and absence is thus evident in the conflict between the speaker's knowledge of the addressee's physical existence and his frustration at being unable to reach her. The poem charts the effect of this conflict, as the speaker moves further away from the possibility of physical union with the addressee and so towards an impression of absence, both of the addressee and of himself. Consequently, the physical existence of the speaker himself appears to be threatened, since he realises that if he were confronted with the beloved's real, physical presence, he would be reduced to the spectral level at which she currently exists for him: 'Je deviendrais une ombre sans doute'. This image

suggests both a difference and a unity between the two figures. On the one hand, the speaker's inferiority and distance are suggested by the fact that he could only be a shadow in her presence. Yet on the other hand, by styling himself as the shadow cast by her physical presence he asserts an integral relationship between the two figures.

This image of the 'ombre' has two distinct connotations. Firstly, it is suggestive of death, in that it evokes the mythical shades of the underworld. This definition establishes an existential connection between the poet's unrequited love and his physical being, through the implication that he will die if he cannot reach his beloved. Secondly, the evocations of a spectre and/or a shadow render the figure both absent and present, as outlined above. The description of the speaker as a shadow thus emphasises her absence while also hinting at the presence of a figure that casts the shadow.⁴⁴

The 'balances sentimentales' that define the first half of Desnos's poem 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' – the delicate equilibrium between waking and sleeping reality, and thus between the poet and the beloved – tips in the second half of the poem in favour of dream, which is presented as a positive move towards the beloved. Desnos's biographer Katharine Conley argues that the phrase 'Je dors debout' implies that the speaker has become lifeless, having lost control of his movements and of his consciousness.⁴⁵ Yet the tone of the rest of these lines does not support Conley's reading, since it indicates rather a positive and intentional turn towards this sleeping reality, suggestive of a surrealist 'sommeil'. The speaker portrays his physical body as continuing to engage with that reality ('le corps exposé à toutes les apparences de la vie et de l'amour'), even though his

⁴⁴ Dumas states that in the cycle 'A la mystérieuse', which includes 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', Desnos's addressee is a phantom but cannot become an 'ombre' because 'l'ombre suppose quelque support réel'. This comment overlooks the fact that the beloved is referred to as a shadow in 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', which thus indeed does suggest that there is a real beloved who is casting the shadow. Dumas, *Étude de 'Corps et Biens'*, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Conley, p. 51.

mind is fully given over to the beloved, in dream ('Je dors debout'). In this way, the speaker's consciousness splits into two: he is both himself and his own, sleeping, *Doppelgänger*.

Conley's interpretation of the line 'O balances sentimentales' as representing the precarious moment that separates dream and shadow from waking reality supports this notion of the sustained tension between the two realms. Conley argues that this line depicts Desnos's ideal of the love relationship, the perfect harmony with the beloved that can occur only in the 'surrealistic eternal present of an instant's duration'.⁴⁶ Yet the term 'apparences' in line 10 of the poem suggests that there is some slippage between these two realms, for the reality of life and love is depicted as merely an 'appearance', recalling the term 'apparition' and thus once again suggesting a spectral existence. These two realms thereby appear to merge, each moment containing both elements of sleeping and waking, of dream and reality. The boundaries between sleeping and waking reality are thus blurred, creating a third realm which, like the spectre, encompasses two otherwise distinct spheres.

At the end of the poem, the image of the shadow itself doubles, referring both to a spectral being and to the shadow that marks time on a sundial. This latter image inserts a *memento mori* into the poem, suggesting that the speaker is reminding the addressee of her own mortality. So the speaker transforms his spectral quality, originally a consequence of his failure to achieve physical union with the addressee, into something more decisive, in that he is able to gain control over his relationship with the addressee. However, this control is only achieved negatively. By threatening to become 'plus ombre cent fois' than the shadow that represents her mortality, the speaker styles himself as a darker and more

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

certain fate than even her own death, suggesting that he will relentlessly haunt her life. The term 'allègrement', incongruous in this otherwise bleak close to the poem, thus takes on a similarly sinister tone, as it indicates that the shadow is moving briskly across the sundial, and that the addressee's life is therefore swiftly drawing to a close.

The conflict between presence and absence throughout the poem is compounded by the final two words. The apparently affirmative 'ta vie' is undermined by the *memento mori* that precedes it. Just as the speaker comes to define his existence by the certainty of his death ('être fantôme parmi les fantômes'), so the addressee's existence comes to be defined by such a certainty. The 'balances sentimentales' thus ultimately swing in the speaker's favour, yet only because he purports to gain control over the addressee by focusing on the certainty of her own death.⁴⁷

This notion of the certainty of reunion in death also inserts a threatening note into these poems by Desnos. The spectral figures inhabit a liminal realm, in that they are neither entirely present nor absent, but hint at both these states. This tension between familiarity and unfamiliarity parallels Freud's concept of the uncanny and of the *Doppelgänger*, in that it suggests the terrifying return of something once familiar in a context in which it appears strange.⁴⁸ So Frey's interpretation of Schleiermacher's translation theory is recalled, since on his account the translated poem may be viewed as a spectral figure that simultaneously evokes and estranges the original text. In line with such thinking, Celan's translation of Desnos's poem 'Le Dernier poème' thematises its own status as such a spectral double of the original, as the following analysis demonstrates.

⁴⁷ Another poem from the same cycle more explicitly indicates this potential reunion through death, by suggesting that 'moi' and 'toi' can only become 'nous' in death: 'Toi et moi, nous mourrons bientôt'. Desnos, 'Comme une main à l'instant de la mort' (1926), in *Œuvres*, pp. 543-44.

⁴⁸ Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, XII, 227-68.

5 'Le Dernier poème'

LE DERNIER POÈME

J'ai rêvé tellement fort de toi,
J'ai tellement marché, tellement parlé,
Tellement aimé ton ombre,
Qu'il ne me reste plus rien de toi.
Il me reste d'être l'ombre parmi les ombres
D'être cent fois plus ombre que l'ombre
D'être l'ombre qui viendra et reviendra dans ta vie ensoleillée.

This poem is one of Desnos's best-known poems, and for years was considered to be his last, written in the concentration camp at Theresienstadt shortly before he died in 1945. However, the genesis of this poem is now thought to have been very different, indeed the poem itself is understood not to have been composed in that form by Desnos at all. On the contrary, the poem seems to have emerged as a result of a series of translations and mistranslations, which began with an anonymous obituary for Desnos in the Czech newspaper *Svobodné Noviny* on 31 July 1945. Conley has given the clearest account of the genesis of the poem, as follows.

The final lines of Desnos's poem 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' were cited in the Czech obituary. However, they were translated into Czech and set out as a verse poem rather than in the prose-poem style of Desnos's original.⁴⁹ On 4 August 1945, L. Vittet (Conley does not give any information as to the identity of this person) sent two copies of the Czech article and a draft French translation of it to Pierre Bost, an acquaintance of Youki

⁴⁹ In an article on what he refers to as the 'legend' of Desnos's last poem, the Czech poet Adolf Kroupa states that the Czech version of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' was from a translation by Jindrich Horejsi, but was restructured as a verse poem in the obituary. Kroupa, 'La légende du dernier poème de Desnos', *Les Lettres françaises*, 9 June 1960, p. 1 and p. 5 (p. 1).

Foujita in Paris.⁵⁰ In Vittet's translation, the lines from 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' are not included. Moreover, the final line of the Czech article, which reads 'His poetic lines therefore acquire a meaning at once more singular and more tragic', has been altered. Vittet has rearranged this line, adding a reference to the poet's 'destiny', and explicitly stating that the poem was written for Desnos's companion: 'Une destinée singulière et tragique a donné un sens concret au contenu du seul poème trouvé sur lui et probablement dédié à sa compagne.'⁵¹ A week after Vittet sent this translation to Bost, an anonymous French version of the article was published in the literary journal of the French Resistance, *Les Lettres françaises*, using a translation that combines Vittet's version and that in the Czech article.⁵² The intimation that Desnos wrote a poem for his companion is retained, but the lines from 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' are reinstated. However, these lines are not cited as they appear in the original publication of that poem, but appear to have been translated from the Czech version. This version of the poem is the text that came to be known as 'Le Dernier poème'. Indeed, the title of this article is 'Le Dernier poème de Robert Desnos'. As Kroupa states, 'c'est ainsi que naquit la légende du dernier poème de Robert Desnos.'⁵³

Consequently, 'Le Dernier poème' is today generally thought to be the result of a mistranslation of the final lines of Desnos's poem 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi'. In that poem, the speaker fears that he will become a spectre ('il ne me reste plus [...] qu'à être fantôme parmi les fantômes'), apparently foreseeing his own death. So in the context of Desnos's death in Theresienstadt and of the citation of lines from 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' in his Czech

⁵⁰ Conley, p. 202.

⁵¹ 'Le dernier poème de Robert Desnos', *Les Lettres françaises*, 11 August 1945, p. 3. Conley (p. 205) suggests that Vittet may have altered this final line, including the reference to Desnos's 'companion', out of compassion for Youki Foujita.

⁵² Anon, 'Le dernier poème de Robert Desnos', 11 August 1945, p. 3.

⁵³ Kroupa, 'La légende du dernier poème de Desnos', p. 5.

obituary, that poem is infused 'd'un pressentiment, d'une véracité terribles'.⁵⁴ Indeed, the poet's anticipation of his own death appears to be confirmed by the transformation of the poem into 'Le Dernier poème', which both arises from and commemorates Desnos's death. The existence of 'Le Dernier poème' thus retroactively impacts on the meaning of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', a recontextualisation that is suggested by the introduction to the final lines of that poem in the Czech article. Here, the writer asserts that the lines take on an additional meaning in the light of Desnos's death: 'et ses vers acquièrent un sens singulier et tragique.'⁵⁵ As such, the poem's distinct afterlife is anticipated in the introduction to this first version of 'Le Dernier poème'.

The status of 'Le Dernier poème' is thus unique within Desnos's oeuvre, in that it was not written by the poet himself in that form, despite having been published extensively as such. Consequently, the poem itself figures as a double of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', in precisely the sense that the translation has been described above by Frey and Beese; for the new poem is the product of a translation and is both the same as, and different from, the earlier poem. Moreover, it is more literally ethereal in that it appears from beyond the grave, since its composition occurs after Desnos has died. This notion that the poet may continue to speak from beyond the grave is foregrounded in Desnos's own writings, such as in the speaker's apparent posthumous expression in 'L'Épithaphe'. Like that poem, 'Le Dernier poème' was conceived as a result of a kind of epitaph (the Czech article), and as such represents the continuation of Desnos's expression after his death. Furthermore, in his volume 'La liberté ou l'amour' (1927), the speaker contrasts the endurance of the written text with the brevity of the individual life, suggesting that the eternity of the text transcends any individual life. A sustained tension is thus posited between this eternity

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵⁵ Translated by Kroupa and cited in 'La légende du dernier poème de Desnos', p. 1.

and the contingency of life.⁵⁶ When read in this context, the expression beyond death suggested by 'L'Épître' and 'Le Dernier poème' represents precisely the notion that the written text transcends individual death.

The details given by Conley in her biography of Desnos about the reception of 'Le Dernier poème' in France suggest that the poem has been transformed in French cultural memory into a Holocaust and a Resistance poem in ways that were both the result and a symptom of French society's difficulty in coming to terms with its role in the Second World War.⁵⁷ The poem's adoption as a memorial to the victims of deportation is indeed demonstrated by its inscription on the wall of the Monument to the Martyrs of Deportation in Paris (completed in 1962). This re-definition of the poem lends it overtones that its original, 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', does not contain, in that it becomes, according to Conley: '(1) a concentration camp poem; (2) a rewritten surrealist poem; (3) a patriotic love poem to France; (4) a reassuring love poem; (5) a true Resistance poem; and (6) a touch-stone poem for remembering Desnos's life.'⁵⁸ The poem can thus be used to contribute to a post-war celebration of the French Resistance and the concomitant suppression of French collaboration. Moreover, it removes the uncomfortable elements associated with 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi', since the beloved is no longer rejecting but loyal; the love no longer unrequited but enduring even beyond death; and the boundaries between life and death that are blurred, transgressed and disturbing in 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' are rendered distinct, literal and therefore less transgressive (in other words, the poet's self-definition as an 'ombre' is acceptable because he is indeed dead). Furthermore, Desnos's apparent return to one of his more traditionally surrealist poems

⁵⁶ Desnos, *La Liberté ou l'amour* (1927), in *Œuvres*, pp. 317-94. Cf. Michael Sheringham, 'La mort et les lois du désir dans l'écriture surréaliste de Desnos', in Dumas (ed.), *Moi qui suis Robert Desnos*, pp. 69-84 (pp. 79-80).

⁵⁷ Conley, pp. 205-12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

suggests a consistency in his aesthetics throughout his life, which was not in fact the case.⁵⁹ This compelling description of the appropriation of a poem by a memorialising and somewhat revisionary discourse suggests that 'Le Dernier poème' can be considered to be spectral in three ways. Firstly, its reception is defined by the reader's assumption of its (supposed) provenance, from a dying poet; secondly, that apparent origin proves to be illusory; and thirdly, its similarity to, yet difference from, 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' renders it a double of that original poem.

However, Conley's focus on the status of 'Le Dernier poème' within the post-war French historical consciousness does not take account of the more positive interpretations of the poem's genesis. For, regardless of its reception by the French public and Establishment, the poem was initially created out of respect and love for both Robert Desnos and Youki Foujita. The Czech obituary, and the subsequent mistranslation of its introduction so that it appeared to be dedicated to Youki Desnos, renders 'Le Dernier poème' a poem of mourning and commemoration of the dead, and of compassion and love for the living. To designate the poem a legend is therefore to undermine its status as a separate poem in its own right, created as a result of these positive impulses, albeit not by Desnos himself.

6 'Le Dernier poème' in Translation

Celan did not discover the genesis of 'Le Dernier poème', and that it was therefore probably not composed in that form by Desnos, until after his translations had gone to press for the anthology edited by Klee-Palyi.⁶⁰ The unique status of 'Le Dernier poème'

⁵⁹ See Conley's more detailed analysis of the various aspects of the reception of 'Le Dernier poème', pp. 208-11.

⁶⁰ In a letter of 1 August 1960 to Enzensberger, who wished to publish 'Das letzte Gedicht' in his anthology *Museum der modernen Poesie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), Celan stated: "Das letzte Gedicht" von Desnos ist... keineswegs sein letztes Gedicht; es ist vielmehr – aber das fiel mir erst später auf – ein Bruchstück eines früheren Gedichts, dem dann 1945, als man Desnos in der Nähe von Theresienstadt in einem sterbenden KZ-Häftling wiedererkannte, eine – angesichts der Umstände leicht zu verstehende – Selbstständigkeit und "Letztheit" zuwuchs. Ich bin kein Freund von solchen

renders Celan's translation of it exceptional also within his translation oeuvre. When read in the light of its unusual provenance, Celan's version appears to thematise both the French poem's relationship to its source text (the poem 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi') and its own status as a translation of a translation:

DAS LETZTE GEDICHT

Vor lauter Von-dir-Träumen,
lauter Gehn, lauter Sprechen
mit deinem Schatten,
lauter Ihn-Lieben,
bleibt mir nun nichts mehr von dir,
bleibt mir nur dies:
der Schatten Schatten zu sein,
der Schatten-Schemen,
der ein und aus geht
bei deinem sonnigen Leben.

(a) The translation's manifest meaning

An immediately evident difference between 'Le Dernier poème' and Celan's translation is the increase in line breaks in the German version, which increases the impression of desolation and solitude already evident in the French poem. Moreover, in line with this bleaker tone, there are far fewer first-person pronouns in Celan's version of the poem.

Mythen, auch da nicht, wo ihr Entstehen so verständlich bleibt; ich bitte Sie also, dieses Gedicht nicht aufzunehmen.' Enzensberger wrote to Celan in response to his letter, thanking him for the information about the circumstances of 'Le Dernier poème', of which he had not been aware. He nevertheless asserted that he still wished the poem translation to be part of the anthology, and suggested that it be printed without the title, offering the following explanation: 'Damit wäre der Legende, besonders hier zulande, wo sie sich noch gar nicht herumgesprochen hat, der Boden entzogen; das Gedicht wäre so zu retten.' In response, Celan proposed that the poem be printed with the title in inverted commas, which is indeed how it appears in Enzensberger's anthology. In the index, the original poem is entitled '[J'ai rêvé tellement fort de toi]', rather than 'Le Dernier poème'. See Enzensberger, p. 195 and p. 364. Excerpts from the correspondence between Celan and Enzensberger are cited in Harbusch, "Begegnungen im Gedicht", pp. 559-60. Having discovered the origins of the poem, Celan also inserted inverted commas around the title 'Das letzte Gedicht' in his own copy of Klee-Palyi's anthology, held in the DLA.

Where Desnos's poem begins with the active first person singular, 'je', asserting the speaker's subjectivity, the equivalent pronoun ('ich') does not occur at all in the entire German version. Moreover, the speaker's agency in 'Das letzte Gedicht' is further compromised by the transformation of the active noun 'J'ai rêvé' into a gerund, 'Träumen'. As the subject of the sentence, this verbal noun takes precedence over both the speaker and the addressee. Thus the dream-like, spectral version of reality is privileged over the speaker's subjectivity.

Just as the speaker's vitality is weakened in the German version, so too the status of the addressee is questioned. While in 'Le Dernier poème' the depiction of the speaker and the addressee suggests a love relationship, albeit an unrequited one, the more impersonal tone of Celan's version undermines this reference. In particular, the use of the masculine 'Ihn' in the fourth line, 'lauter Ihn-Lieben', distances the image from the female beloved. Celan's version thus refers less directly to an unrequited love or to an absent beloved. Harbusch maintains that the movement in 'Das letzte Gedicht' is positive, since it appears to represent the gradual integration of the speaker and the addressee.⁶¹ However, the four-fold repetition of the word 'Schatten' in the German version, coupled with the lack of personal pronouns, implies rather that the speaker is not achieving union with the addressee, but with its shadow.

The speaker's apparent fixation on the addressee's shadow culminates three lines later, with his prediction that he too will become a shadow: 'bleibt mir nur dies: / der Schatten Schatten zu sein / der Schatten-Schemen'. This premonition is also present in the original French poem, but Celan's translation intensifies the impression of the transformation through the repetition of 'Schatten', as well as introducing the image of a

⁶¹ Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 155.

ghost ('Schemen'). A draft of the seventh line of Celan's translation shows that he initially kept closer to the original:

Mein Teil: ein Schatten unter Schatten sein
Ein Schatten, schattenhafter noch als Schatten sind⁶²

Yet the final version shows a striking departure from the original:

der Schatten Schatten zu sein,
der Schatten-Schemen,

The image of the speaker becoming one shade among many, as is portrayed in the French poem, is replaced by the unusual and abstract duality of the phrase 'der Schatten Schatten'. Rather than suggesting that the speaker would join other shades, perhaps evoking an image of his descent into the underworld, the impression created is of one extraordinary shade, apparently more shade-like than the shades themselves.

This emphasis on the speaker's spectral nature is intensified by the term 'Schemen', which compounds the apparent allusion to the underworld and to the speaker's status as a haunting presence. This addition affects the status of the speaker and of the shadow, for rather than being represented as an intensified shadow ('cent fois plus'), the speaker is likened to a phantom. The idea of the speaker's death, which is alluded to in the original poem by his identification with the 'shade' ('ombre'), is thus rendered more explicit in Celan's version. So the progression in 'Le Dernier poème', in which the speaker changes from an active figure into a shadow, is taken one step further by Celan, by indicating the speaker's death.

⁶² DLA: D.90.1.396 (ÜF / 7.2)

Celan's addition of the compound 'Schatten-Schemen' replaces the speaker's desire, in Desnos's poem, to be 'cent fois plus ombre que l'ombre'. By binding the two separate nouns 'Schatten' and 'Schemen' together, the term 'Schemen' seems to qualify the 'Schatten'. A spectre could be evoked through a number of other German nouns, for example 'das Gespenst', 'der Geist', 'das Phantom' and 'das Trugbild'.⁶³ Yet the word 'Schemen' is different from these other terms in that it is closest to the meaning of the French 'ombre', since it evokes both a shadow and a ghost. Indeed, it is defined in Grimms' dictionary as both a 'Schatten' and a 'Schattenbild', the latter denoting 'das durch einen lichthemmenden körper hervorgerufene dunkel'.⁶⁴ Consequently, the addition of this term in 'Das letzte Gedicht' stresses the fact that a shadow indicates the existence of something substantial that blocks the light. So, just as has been noted with regard to the image of the phantom in Desnos's poetry, Celan's rendering of 'Le Dernier poème' emphasises the impression of absent presence, placing the speaker in the liminal third space of the spectre and the dream.

Moreover, the addition of the term 'Schemen' establishes a retrospective link to 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi'. The relationship between the two French poems is highlighted by the insertion of the image of a phantom into the poem, for this image recalls the final lines of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi':

J'ai tant rêvé de toi, tant marché, parlé, couché avec ton fantôme qu'il ne me reste plus peut-être, et pourtant, qu'à être fantôme parmi les fantômes et plus ombre cent fois que l'ombre qui se promène et se promènera allégrement sur le cadran solaire de ta vie.

⁶³ Celan also translated 'fantôme' as 'Schemen' in his draft translation of the first stanza of Desnos's poem 'Night of loveless nights'.

⁶⁴ Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854), VIII, 2536-38.

By coupling the images 'Schatten' and 'Schemen' in 'Das letzte Gedicht', Celan thereby combines 'Le Dernier poème' and its source, 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi'. This intertext is all the more surprising considering that Celan did not know about the genesis of 'Le Dernier poème' when he completed his translation. It thus appears that the allusion to 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' in 'Das letzte Gedicht' was not a conscious alteration. Nonetheless, the translation reclaims part of the French poem's original identity, thereby tracing a circle that joins the three poems. As such, 'Das letzte Gedicht' is located between the two French poems, referring to both of them simultaneously. This position parallels the blurring of boundaries already identified in the realms of daydream (neither waking nor sleeping) and of spectres (neither alive nor dead, present nor absent).

(b) The spectral translation

Celan's version of 'Le Dernier poème' also emphasises the status of translation itself as a spectral double, recalling Frey's and Beese's theoretical considerations. As such, the evocation of a spectre in the new version renders it a self-reflexive thematisation of the translation process. For example, this self-reflexivity is perceptible in the absence of any active first-person pronouns in the German version. As Frey argues, the lyrical *Ich* of a translation is merely pretending to be the original *Ich*, to feel the same emotions and to undergo the same experiences.⁶⁵ 'Das letzte Gedicht' works against this feature of translation by withdrawing the nominative first-person pronoun altogether. As such, the translation does not purport to imitate the original poem exactly, and so does not enter into the deception that Frey posits. Instead, the new connotations of the translation differentiate it from the original, lending it an originality of its own. Similarly, the transformation of the active verb 'J'ai rêvé' into the verbal noun 'Träumen' shifts the emphasis of the line from the speaker onto the dream itself. So the dream-like, spectral

⁶⁵ Frey, pp. 46-47.

version of reality comes to the fore and replaces the speaker's subjectivity, just as a translation may be seen to replace the subjectivity of its original.

This impression of the speaker's subordination is intensified in Celan's translation of the French phrase, 'Il me reste d'être'. In the German version, this phrase is isolated as a single line, separated from the rest of the sentence by a colon: 'bleibt mir nur dies:'. The inevitable pause at the end of the line, before the 'dies' is afforded a referent, means that the pronoun may be interpreted as referring to the translation itself.⁶⁶ Lines 5 and 6 may thus be understood to describe the translator's position, in that complete access to the original poem ('dir') is impossible, so that all that remains is this mediated version ('dies'): 'bleibt mir nun nichts mehr von dir, / bleibt mir nur dies:'.

A self-reflexive character is also evident in lines 3 to 5 of Celan's translation, in which Desnos's disjointed phrasing is rearranged so that poetic speech is evoked:

J'ai tellement marché, tellement parlé,
Tellement aimé ton ombre,

lauter Gehn, lauter Sprechen
mit deinem Schatten,
lauter Ihn-Lieben.

The insertion of the term 'mit' in the German version renders the phrase more comprehensible, so that the verb of speaking suggests that the speaker is conversing with the addressee's shadow. If the speaker is understood to represent the translator, then this communication with the addressee's shadow suggests that the original text cannot be

⁶⁶ Beese (p. 49) identifies a similar process in Celan's translation of Mallarmé's poem 'Rondel', in that the addressee ('du') of Celan's version appears to refer to the original poem.

grasped by an other in its original form, but that the reader (and therefore the translator) has access only to its shadow, a metaphor for the translation itself. So the translation's status as a 'Scheinleben' in comparison to the original poem, as Beese describes it, is thematised in the poem itself. The separation between the addressee and its shadow is expressed by the use of the impersonal third person singular in the phrase 'lauter Ihn-Lieben'. The capital first letter of 'Ihn' lends it more weight than the 'dir' and 'deinem' of the previous lines. The separation of the addressee (the original text) and its shadow (the translator's reading of the text) is thus made explicit in the German version.

The phrase 'der Schatten Schatten' functions as a translation of both the original phrase 'l'ombre parmi les ombres' and the following line: 'cent fois plus ombre que l'ombre'. For the phrase 'der Schatten Schatten' can suggest either that the speaker is one of several shadows, or that he is the shadow of shadows. Moreover, a third understanding of this German phrase arises in the light of the unusual provenance of 'Le Dernier poème' as a spectral double of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi'. In this context, the doubling of the shadow suggested by 'der Schatten Schatten' may be interpreted as a self-reflexive definition of its own status. For the version thus styles itself as a spectral double of a text that is already itself a double: a translation of a translation.

The idea that a translation may be conceptualised as the shadow of the original poem informs and is informed by Celan's comments in an interview given shortly after he translated this poem. In an interview for *Die Welt* in January 1958, Celan is reported as stating: 'Gedichte entwerfen Leben – sie werfen ihren Schatten voraus: Man muß ihnen nachleben. Das Leben selber muß durch das Gedicht hindurch.'⁶⁷ The notion, suggested by 'Das letzte Gedicht', that a translation may constitute the original poem's shadow, in

⁶⁷ Harry Neumann, p. 5.

that it is both different from and yet the same as that original, elucidates Celan's somewhat opaque metaphor. For the translation renders literal what otherwise remains insubstantial, namely the poem's continued life in the form of its recontextualisation by new readers and translators. By asserting that a poem casts its own shadow ahead of itself, Celan thereby suggests that the poem always contains the potential for these future interpretations. Celan's comments in this interview further inform the image of the shadow in 'Das letzte Gedicht', since the phrase 'Gedichte entwerfen Leben' adds an existential element to the relationship between the poem and the shadow. Just as 'Das letzte Gedicht' implies the speaker's continued influence beyond death, so Celan's words suggest an integral bond between poetry and life. The notion that individual life passes through the poem, and that it is this continual renewal that ensures the poem's vitality and endurance, is explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

7 Conclusion

The process that led to the creation of the so-called legend of Desnos's poem is of remarkable significance for an interpretation of Celan's reception and translation of Desnos's poetry, and more broadly of the nature of poetry and translation themselves. For the transformation of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' into a different poem, with a whole new set of inferences, exemplifies the idea that any poem contains the latent potential for future meanings, which may then be activated by the impact of certain contexts or types of reception.

This idea of a poem's repeated recontextualisation beyond its initial manifestation is foregrounded in the poems by Desnos discussed here, through the prominence of spectral imagery and the related blurring of boundaries between life and death such as in 'L'Épître'. However, just as the speaker of that poem must concede that his

addressees (and therefore perhaps his readers) are now responsible for the cultivation and prosperity of his home, and that he no longer has control over it, so the recontextualisation of the poem by his readers appears to be beyond the immediate grasp of the original poet. Rather, as Frey argues, it is the poems' ongoing reception that determines its identity. The trajectory of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' demonstrates the particular capacity of translation to effect these changes, representing that medium as a potent and visible force for change that therefore ensures the poem's continued vitality. The contrast between the death of the individual and the capacity of the written text to transcend death, which is a central feature of Desnos's poetics, is therefore illustrated in his preoccupation with liminality and in the creation of 'Le Dernier poème'. However, as suggested by the subject's ability to question but not to control in 'L'Épitaphe', so the subjectivity of the original poem is represented as being contingent on its interaction with other readers and contexts. This tension between the individuality of the poem and its receptiveness to new meanings is a prominent strand within Celan's poetics, as developed in the following chapters.

My reading of 'Le Dernier poème' and of 'Das letzte Gedicht' has shown that both poems are located in a liminal space between the categories of original and translation. And Celan's 'Das letzte Gedicht' can be interpreted as a thematisation of its own status as a translation of a translation, for it represents the original poem ('Le Dernier poème') as a shadow and styles itself 'der Schatten Schatten', so positioning itself at a double remove from the original poem ('J'ai tant rêvé de toi'). As the foregoing analysis of the series of poems by Desnos that thematise spectres demonstrated, the spectre is a double form in that it both reflects the original object and is a new figure in its own right. As such, the translation can be symbolised by the spectre, since it is both the same as and different from the original poem. Through its treatment of the spectral imagery, 'Das

letzte Gedicht' both illustrates and thematises this idea and so represents translation as the point of tension between identity and difference. As the following chapter shows, this tension is a central tenet of Celan's poetics, and comes to the fore in Celan's version of a poem by Éluard. I show that, like 'Das letzte Gedicht', this new version self-reflexively thematises the translation process. Consequently, the poetological content of Celan's translations is confirmed and Celan's transformation of surrealist poems is revealed to be the site *par excellence* of such metapoetic exposition.

Chapter 7

‘Anders von Mal zu Mal’: Celan’s Encounter with Paul

Éluard

The late 1950s were a crucial period in the development of Celan’s poetics. As Celan’s poetry became more widely known, so his status within the German-language literary sphere was enhanced. As a result, he began to be invited to make public statements about literature, such as in response to questionnaires from the Librairie Flinker, a German-language bookshop in Paris. Moreover, Celan was the recipient of two of the most prestigious literary prizes in Germany, firstly the *Literaturpreis der freien Hansestadt Bremen* (referred to here as the ‘Bremen Prize’) in January 1958, and secondly the Büchner Prize in October 1960. The speeches that Celan gave at these award ceremonies contain weighty and complex poetological considerations, and the Büchner prize speech in particular, published afterwards as *Der Meridian*, has become central to the analysis of Celan’s poetics.¹

Celan also completed a great number of translations during the late 1950s, including the versions of Robert Desnos’s poems, whose metapoetic qualities have been discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter I explore a further translation by Celan of a French surrealist poem, ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ (1935) by Paul Éluard. By focusing in particular on Celan’s transformation of the surrealist elements of the poem I show that he has created a metapoetic text that reflects the key concerns articulated in his poetological writings of the time. This chapter therefore begins with an introduction to Celan’s

¹ Paul Celan, ‘Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen’, (III, 185-86); and Celan, *Der Meridian* (III, 187-202).

poetological texts during this period, in order to provide a theoretical context for the analysis of the translation.

1 Poetological Writings

During the late 1950s, at the time when Celan was reading and translating poems by Desnos and Éluard, he also became particularly interested in the writings of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938).² Celan bought an edition of Mandelstam's poetry in May 1957, and published his German versions of selected poems by Mandelstam in 1959.³ The extent to which Celan's engagement with Mandelstam's poetry can be considered to have contributed to the development of his own poetics is evident in an essay on Mandelstam composed by Celan for broadcast on German radio in March 1960.⁴ This essay is punctuated with quotations from Mandelstam's poems, and Celan's poetological discussion is closely based on those texts. However, several phrases from the essay are repeated in the final version of *Der Meridian* (given seven months after the radio broadcast), where they are detached from the specific reference to Mandelstam's poetry. Indeed, the Russian poet is not mentioned in *Der Meridian*, although a comparison of the two speeches demonstrates the central position of Mandelstam's poetry within Celan's poetological reflections.

One element of Mandelstam's poetics that parallels an ongoing concern in Celan's own

² The spelling of the name of this Russian poet tends to vary in texts on Celan, owing to the transliteration of the Russian script. Celan called him 'Ossip Mandelstamm', the double 'm' at the end of the surname rendering the name a combination of the words 'Mandel', a symbol of the Judaism, and 'Stamm', evoking the image of a root or tribe. This spelling thus seems to reflect the importance that Celan attributed to Mandelstam's Jewish roots. I shall use the standard English spelling, 'Osip Mandelstam'. See for example *Complete poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam*, trans. by Burton Raffel and Alla Burago (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973).

³ Osip Mandelstam, *Gedichte. Aus dem Russischen übertragen von Paul Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1959).

⁴ Paul Celan, 'Die Dichtung Ossip Mandelstamms', in Böschenstein and Christiane Wittkop (eds), *Paul Celan. Der Meridian: Endfassung – Entwürfe – Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 215-21. References to this volume are henceforth noted parenthetically after each quotation, with the letter 'M' followed by the page number.

poetics, and which Celan accordingly addresses in his radio essay, is the notion that poetic language is able to recall past events, thus bringing them into the present. Celan refers to this notion of temporal layering in his own paraphrase of a quotation from one of Mandelstam's essays:

Die Dichtung – in einem seiner Essays über die Poesie nennt Mandelstamm sie einen Pflug – reißt die untersten Zeitschichten auf, die 'Schwarzerde der Zeit' tritt zutage. (M 219)⁵

This metaphor indicates that poetry engenders a dialogue with the past by bringing the buried layers of time to the surface. Such a concern demonstrates the continuity of Celan's thought from 'Edgar Jené', since it recalls two of Celan's key theories that were first articulated in that text. These two notions are that of remaining in dialogue with the dark past (referred to as 'die finstere Quellen' in 'Edgar Jené'); and the idea that perception must be revolutionised by looking beyond surface appearances, conceptualised as breaking through barriers to reach a deeper, more authentic knowledge ('Erkenntnis').

It thus seems that the theory expressed in 'Edgar Jené', that the past can intrude into the present in linguistic structures, remains central to Celan's poetics in the late 1950s, but that the metaphors used to articulate this idea have been transformed. While in 'Edgar Jené' the symbolism revolves around water imagery, geological imagery is used in the essay on Mandelstam and in several of Celan's poetological notes written in the late 1950s. Jürgen Lehmann attributes this interest in geological formations, which is particularly evident in the poems of *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), to the fact that such forms

⁵ The actual text of Mandelstam's quotation, from his essay 'Das Wort und die Kultur' (1921), translated by Ralph Dutli, reads: 'Poesie ist ein Pflug, der die Zeit in einer Weise aufreißt, daß ihre Tiefenschichten, ihre Schwarzerde zutage tritt.' Quoted in M 251. See Mandelstam, *Über den Gesprächspartner. Gesammelte Essays*, I, ed. and trans. by Ralph Dutli (Zurich: Ammann, 1991), p. 84.

tend to be created through accretion, with layers building up over time.⁶ As such, the layers revealed by a cross-section of stone or earth can represent the simultaneity of different periods of time, a notion that is fundamental to both Mandelstam's and Celan's poetics.⁷

Geological metaphors are also central to Celan's Bremen speech. In this context of linguistic layers, the *Bremer Rede* begins with a consideration of the multiple, and unexpected, connotations that any individual word can hold. Since the text is essentially a speech of thanks for a literary prize, Celan's first sentence addresses the verb 'danken'. However, before this word is even mentioned, he points out its etymological connection to the verb 'denken': 'Denken und Danken sind in unserer Sprache Worte ein und desselben Ursprungs' (III, 185).⁸ This opening establishes the theme of Celan's short speech as an expression of gratitude that cannot be extricated from its connection to 'denken', and therefore to the further cognate words "gedenken", "eingedenk sein", "Andenken", "Andacht" (III, 185). Thus, the layers of meaning and connotation present in each word are at the core of this speech, suggesting that language takes on new meanings according to its interaction with reality.

Later in the speech, Celan represents language as an active force in this production of

⁶ This concept of the simultaneity of past, present and future is analogous to French philosopher Henri Bergson's notion of 'durée', as discussed briefly by Jürgen Lehmann in his *Kommentar zu Paul Celans 'Die Niemandrose'* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997), p. 15.

⁷ Jürgen Lehmann (ed.), *Die Niemandrose*, p. 26. Ivanović also argues that the creation of geological layers has a historical dimension in Celan's poetics, through reference to an analogy between the layers of earth and time in Celan's prose text 'Gespräch im Gebirg' (1959; III, 169-73). Ivanović, *Das Gedicht im Geheimnis der Begegnung: Dichtung und Poetik Celans im Kontext seiner russischen Lektüren* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 341-42.

⁸ Celan's connection of the terms 'denken', 'danken', 'Andenken' and 'Gedächtnis' suggests an allusion to Heidegger's collection of lectures *Was heißt Denken?* (1954), in which Heidegger argues that the words 'Denken', 'Gedachtes', 'Gedächtnis', 'Gedanke' and 'Danken' may be etymologically connected. Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), p. 91. The English translation of this lecture makes the basis of this perceived etymological connection clearer, by stating that the Old English words 'thencan' (to think) and 'thancian' (to thank) are closely related. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 139.

new meanings. He states that language was not lost during the war, but that it passed through 'ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, [...] durch furchtbares Verstummen, [...] durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede' (III, 186). Language is thus represented not only as the object of change, but also as the cause of real events, in that it can bring about death ('todbringende Rede'), so apparently alluding to the horrors of the Nazi period. In his analysis of this speech, Sandro Zanetti finds evidence of this idea that speech may be murderous, in the context of Nazism, in other utterances by Celan, such as in his reference to 'diejenigen [...], die so wortreich zu töten wußten' in a letter to Otto Pöggeler (9 August 1960).⁹ The notion that language may influence thought and action, rather than vice versa, was a central tenet in the debate about the semantic shifts in the German language brought about by the National Socialists' use of language.

Despite passing through these 'tausend Finsternisse', Celan states that language has been enriched by this process: 'Sie [die Sprache] ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, "angereichert" von all dem' (III, 186). 'Zutage treten' and 'angereichert' are mining terms, and the resulting image of the concealment or suppression of language underground recalls the references to the depths in 'Edgar Jené'. Indeed, the 'finstere Quellen' of that text seem to parallel the 'tausend Finsternisse' depicted in the *Bremer Rede*. Yet Celan's imagery has been transferred from water (the 'Tiefsee' in 'Edgar Jené') to the mine. In the earlier text, the image of water recalls the symbolism of water in Freudian psychoanalysis, valorised especially by French surrealism, and representing the realm of the Unconscious. By contrast, the mining imagery of the

⁹ Sandro Zanetti, *'Zeitoffen': Zur Chronographie Paul Celans* (Munich: Fink, 2006), p. 58. The complete letter to Pöggeler is cited in Wiedemann, *Die Goll-Affäre*, pp. 506-07.

Bremer Rede invites a comparison with German Romanticism.¹⁰ However, the surrealists appear to have owed their conception of the Unconscious more to the German Romantics than to Freud, in that they viewed the individual's inner life as a fount of creativity rather than the source of potentially disruptive impulses.¹¹ Consequently, Celan's shift from the image of water to that of mining creates a point of contact with both Romantic and surrealist aesthetics.

The change in the imagery, from the evocation of dark springs in 'Edgar Jené' to depictions of mineral enrichment and ploughing in the *Bremer Rede* and the essay on Mandelstam, nevertheless suggests a shift in the import of Celan's conceptualisation of linguistic change. The blackness of the earth that is brought to the surface by the plough ('die Schwarzerde') may recall the dark springs described in 'Edgar Jené', but its connotations are more immediately and undeniably positive. This earth is more fertile because of the goodness that it draws from below the surface, and so it closely parallels the image of enriched minerals being brought to the surface in the *Bremer Rede*. In these texts Celan is therefore perhaps suggesting that language can only once again become productive if it mingles with the dark layers underneath the surface. If these layers represent the awareness and remembrance of past atrocities, then the geological imagery is a development of, but not a departure from, the assertion in 'Edgar Jené' that the individual should remain in dialogue with the dark sources.

In addition, Georg Michael Schulz has identified a similarity between Celan's imagery and

¹⁰ The proliferation of mining imagery in the works of the German Romantics, and in particular the significance of the underground realm for the Romantic concept of the division between external events and the individual's inner world, is explored by Helmut Gold in his *Erkenntnisse unter Tage. Bergbaumotive in der Literatur der Romantik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1990).

¹¹ In his study of Éluard's poetry, Warning (p. 486) argues that the surrealists owed more to the Romantics than to Freud for their conception of the individual's inner life, in that they valued the Unconscious as a realm of plenitude and authenticity.

the linguistic scepticism of Gustav Landauer, whom Celan held in high regard and whom he mentions explicitly in *Der Meridian* (III, 190).¹² Schulz states that in ‘Edgar Jené’ Celan is concerned with the notion of access to an inner world, which recalls Landauer’s affirmation that the real world is to be found ‘im innersten Kern unseres verborgensten Wesens, im Individuum’, so that he wishes to descend into ‘die Bergwerksschächte meines Innern [...], um die paläontologischen Schätze des Universums in mir zu heben.’¹³ Celan’s mining imagery in the *Bremer Rede* may thus be understood to contain elements of Freudian psychoanalysis, of the Romantic and surrealist treatment of the Unconscious, and of Landauer’s philosophy. This allusion to Landauer does not just have philosophical implications, since the fact that Landauer died as a result of his political convictions also draws out an indication of persecution. The potential allusion to Landauer thus resonates with the apparent references to Nazi persecution in the *Bremer Rede*.

These indications of the Nazi past are also contained in the participle ‘angereichert’. For this term, in quotation marks, combines with the image of ‘tausend Finsternisse’ and the reference to death to suggest an allusion to the so-called Third Reich and the Holocaust. The word ‘Reich’ is contained in the participle ‘angereichert’, and the ‘thousand darknesses’ recall the National Socialist promise of a *Tausendjähriges Reich*.¹⁴ In technical terms, ‘anreichern’ suggests the enrichment of an element through a chemical

¹² Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) was a German-Jewish anarchist and philosopher whose most famous publication was his *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (1911). He was involved in the establishment of the short-lived Bayerische Räterepublik in 1919, and was consequently arrested when Munich was re-taken by *Reichswehr* and right-wing *Freikorps* militants, who were under the control of the Social Democratic government in Berlin. At the beginning of May 1919 Landauer was arrested by these troops and executed.

¹³ Gustav Landauer, *Skepsis und Mystik. Versuch im Anschluß an Mauthners Sprachkritik*, 2nd edn (Cologne: Marcan-Block, 1923), p. 7. Cited in Georg Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977), p. 31.

¹⁴ Cf. Felstiner, p. 115.

procedure.¹⁵ The quotation marks may thus indicate the ironic nature of use of the participle 'angereichert', for the German language indeed took on additional connotations as a result of the Third Reich; yet this process does not appear to have been an enrichment in any positive sense.

As well as the possibility that it refers to the Third Reich, the verb 'anreichern' has further connotations. For example, two compound nouns created from the term are 'der Anreicherofen' (the furnace in which the element is roasted in order to enrich it) and 'die Anreicherschlacke' (the waste material produced by the enrichment process).¹⁶ The verb is thus associated with heating and burning, and so itself may intimate the crematoria of the Nazi death camps. The term 'angereichert' is also used in the context of nuclear energy and warfare, as in the expression 'angereichertes Uran' ('enriched uranium'). The atomic bombs in Japan at the end of the Second World War and the Cold War atomic arms race may thereby be evoked by this term.¹⁷ The multiple layers in a poem such as 'Engführung' (1959; I, 195-204), which refer simultaneously to more than one element of reality, are thus reflected in the layering of the participle 'angereichert'.

Celan's conception in the *Bremer Rede* of linguistic enrichment can be understood as the opposite of the purification of language desired by the interlocutor in 'Edgar Jené'. In this way, the *Bremer Rede* continues the concerns of that earlier text, positing the inevitable intrusion of the past into present linguistic structures. Later in the same year as the Bremen Speech, Celan made a similar statement in a questionnaire sent to him by the

¹⁵ For a range of meanings of the verb 'anreichern', see Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, I, 425.

¹⁶ See Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, I, 425.

¹⁷ Celan's concern with the nuclear issue is suggested in the poem 'Engführung', in particular in the term 'Partikelgestöber'. This poem also seems to refer to the Holocaust, and indeed Szondi's celebrated analysis of this poem reads it as largely Holocaust-related. Szondi, 'Durch die Enge geführt: Versuch über die Verständlichkeit des modernen Gedichts', in *Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) II, 345-89. Cf. Hendrik Birus, 'Sprachgitter', in Lehmann (ed.), *Kommentar zu Paul Celans 'Sprachgitter'* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2005), pp. 209-24.

Librairie Flinker. In response to a question about his current work and future plans, he stated that ‘die deutsche Lyrik geht [...] andere Wege als die französische’ (III, 167). Celan portrays this divergence of the two literatures as being the result of the nature of the German language in the post-war years, which he considers to be a more sober, greyer language than in former times, because of ‘Düsterstes im Gedächtnis’ (III, 167). This distinction between German and French poetic language again implies that any particular language contains essential markers of its speakers’ pasts.

This tension between past and present that suffuses Celan’s poetological texts is part of a wider concern with the tension between different elements in his writings. The notion of the simultaneity of disparate elements is evident in particular in two of Celan’s poetological observations: the first from his radio essay on Mandelstam; and the second from *Der Meridian*. In the essay on Mandelstam, Celan states that his poems reflect ‘ein Spannungsverhältnis der Zeiten, der eigenen und der fremden’ (M 216). This notion that a poem is constituted of both its own elements and elements that are alien to it is repeated in *Der Meridian*:

Noch im Hier und Jetzt des Gedichts – das Gedicht selbst hat ja immer nur diese eine, einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart –, noch in dieser Unmittelbarkeit und Nähe läßt es das ihm, dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen: dessen Zeit. (III, 198-99)

This section of *Der Meridian* is highly significant since it seeks to conceptualise the notion of encounter that is central to Celan’s poetics. It suggests that the poem is individual, immediate and unique, and yet simultaneously open to the ‘mitsprechen’ of other impulses. In this chapter, I demonstrate that this concept of the dual nature of the poem is illustrated, thematised and consequently elucidated in Celan’s German version of

‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ by Éluard. I argue that the duality inherent in surrealist theory, and in particular in Éluard’s concern with the resemblance of disparate objects, lends itself to the formation of Celan’s own concept of poetic duality.

2 ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’

(a) Celan’s translation process

Celan’s translation of Éluard’s poem ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ (1935) was first published in the Insel publishing house yearbook at the beginning of 1959, along with versions by Celan of three other French poems.¹⁸ Celan’s archive in Marbach contains the manuscript of the published version of this translation, as well as the three drafts of the translation that Celan completed on 24 December 1957, shortly before submitting the translation for publication. However, in addition to these drafts, and unusually within Celan’s translation oeuvre, there exists a much earlier draft of this translation. This version is jotted down on the programme of the ‘Festival de Paris’, a cultural festival that took place from April to July 1956.¹⁹ Each of the later drafts shows a development in the translation, so that it is possible to establish with relative certainty the order in which they were written; but by far the most striking difference is between the version from 1956 and the first draft of 1957. The earlier version is more faithful to Éluard’s poem in that it appears to attempt to reproduce the majority of the original poem’s lexical and syntactic features, thereby recreating the optimistic tone of Éluard’s love poem. By contrast, the terminology used in the later versions indicates a progression towards a more poetological tone. A study of these draft translations therefore affords the rare opportunity within Celan’s oeuvre to examine how Celan’s translation process develops,

¹⁸ Celan, ‘Vier Gedichte aus dem Französischen’, in *Insel-Almanach auf das Jahr 1959* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1959), pp. 31-33. The other poems are Guillaume Apollinaire’s ‘Die Herbstzeitlosen’, Stéphane Mallarmé’s ‘Rondel’ and Jules Supervielle’s ‘Airs’.

¹⁹ DLA: ÜF/10.1, D 90.1.405/1.

and how the changes made to the translation parallel the development of his poetics during the latter half of the 1950s.

(b) ‘Nous avons fait la nuit je tiens ta main je veille’: Éluard’s poem

Éluard’s poem, untitled and therefore known by its first line, ‘Nous avons fait la nuit je tiens ta main je veille’, was published in his volume *Facile* in 1935.²⁰

Nous avons fait la nuit je tiens ta main je veille
Je te soutiens de toutes mes forces
Je grave sur un roc l’étoile de tes forces
Sillons profonds où la bonté de ton corps germera
Je me répète ta voix cachée ta voix publique
Je ris encore de l’orgueilleuse
Que tu traites comme une mendiante
Des fous que tu respectes des simples où tu te baignes
Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d’accord avec la tienne avec la nuit
Je m’émerveille de l’inconnue que tu deviens
Une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j’aime
Qui est toujours nouveau

Éluard was still closely associated with Breton’s surrealist movement at the time of writing this poem, and the poem is apparently a simple celebration of the speaker’s love that is stylistically and thematically consonant with Éluard’s surrealist aesthetics, as they have been outlined in Chapter 3. In this poem, these features take the form of erotic imagery, and the concomitant association of the beloved’s fertility with the production of poetry; the correspondence of the lover figure with the poet; a celebration of madness; an assertion of surrender to the unconscious mind; and expression of the wonder that arises from this submission to the Unconscious. Most significantly for this discussion,

²⁰ Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 465-66.

the poem exhibits the tension between apparently opposing images that arises from Éluard's principle of 'ressemblance', a juxtaposition that results in the assertion of permanent renewal.

The aural similarity between the opening words of Éluard's poem, 'Nous avons fait la nuit', and the phrase 'Nous avons fait l'amour' hints at the poem's erotic connotations. Moreover, the image of the night is associated with that of love, in line with Éluard's and Breton's surrealist aesthetics.²¹ The erotic overtones seem to be confirmed in the third and fourth lines, with the image of engraving. The act of engraving expresses the apparent permanence of the love between the speaker and addressee, as well as combining with the image of deep furrows ('sillons profonds') and the beloved's body ('la bonté de ton corps') to reflect the sexual imagery of penetration and female genitalia. In this context, the verb 'germer' also evokes female fertility. The phallic connotations of 'graver' thereby link writing and art to desire and sex, a connection that is fundamental to the surrealist aesthetic.²² The fifth line of the poem continues this analogy between writing and love: 'Je me répète ta voix cachée ta voix publique'. Here, the poet appears to gain his inspiration from the beloved's own expression. The poet is therefore analogous to the lover, and indeed surrealist theory emphasises the role of sexual desire as an essential impetus for the composition of poetry.

The speaker's repetition of the beloved's two voices represents a typically surrealist tension between two apparently opposing images. The repetition of 'ta voix' in this phrase both mimics the act of repetition that it describes and emphasises the incongruous juxtaposition, in that the same voice appears to be simultaneously hidden

²¹ Jean, *La poésie du désir*, pp. 381-82.

²² Cf. Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

and public. The line is consequently structured by a tension between equivalence ('ta voix [...] ta voix') and difference ('cachée [...] publique'). The following lines, in which the beloved is depicted in relation to figures that contrast with her own nature, represent further illustrations of this tension between differing subjects. The beloved's respect for the 'fous' reflects the surrealist admiration of madness as the state that is closest to an authentic relationship to reality. The image of 'simples' consolidates this allusion to madness, since it can refer to 'simpletons'. But the phrase 'des simples où tu te baignes' simultaneously returns to the erotic realm, as it suggests that 'les simples' also refers to the herbs in which the beloved bathes.²³ The evocation of madness is thus juxtaposed with the erotic image of the bathing beloved.

A tension between two apparently discrete elements is also implied by the repetition of the word 'avec' in the following line: 'Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d'accord avec la tienne avec la nuit'. Explicit parallels are drawn between the speaker's and the beloved's heads, and between the speaker's head and the night; but the repetition of 'avec' completes the circle, by indicating a parallel between the beloved's head and the night. Moreover, this harmonisation appears to take place in the speaker's Unconscious. The 'je' disappears in this line, so that the agent is the speaker's head, rather than the speaker himself, and the reflexive form 'se mettre d'accord' implies that this process is occurring without the speaker's active intervention. The speaker's wonder at the result of this new perception of the beloved is expressed in the next line: 'je m'émerveille de l'inconnue que tu deviens'. Thus the speaker's agency appears to be restored, but only in the context of an evocation of the marvellous, which arises from this surrender to the unconscious mind.

²³ In a German translation of this poem by Johannes Hübner 'simples' is translated as 'Kräuter'. Éluard, *Choix de poèmes. Ausgewählte Gedichte*, ed. by Johannes Hübner (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1963), pp. 227-29. This bilingual edition of Éluard's poems is in Celan's library in the DLA.

The portrayal of the beloved as the representative of a multitude, and the expression of permanent renewal in the final two lines, suggest further surrealist impulses: 'Une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j'aime / Qui est toujours nouveau'. The characterisation of the woman as 'semblable à tout ce que j'aime' reflects both Éluard's and Breton's concepts of the surrealist beloved, since for the poets the beloved represents a concentration of all women.²⁴ Moreover, the foundations of surrealist theory could be characterised as the permanent renewal of one's perception of reality, achieved through the assimilation of unexpected and unconventional juxtapositions. The final line of Éluard's poem, 'Qui est toujours nouveau', therefore reflects this central theme. Éluard's poem thus illustrates the way in which surrealist theory and poetry intersect, so that such a poem can be at once a celebration of the speaker's beloved and an exposition of key surrealist theories.

3 Celan's Translation

Éluard's poem is therefore both a love poem and an exposition of surrealist theory, and Celan's translation is layered in a similar way. On the one hand, the manifest content of the poem is the speaker's address to his beloved; yet on the other it can also be interpreted as a poetological poem. So Celan's version mirrors the dual structure of Éluard's poem, but transfers the theoretical considerations from Éluard's surrealist-inspired concerns to an exposition of poetological issues that include a thematisation of the nature of translation. This analysis therefore demonstrates that Celan's poetics of translation emerge in part from an engagement with a surrealist text, and so makes a case for the development of Celan's poetics and their interaction with surrealist works.

²⁴ Gaucheron, p. 196.

The significance of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' within a consideration of that interaction between poetics and translation is rendered yet more compelling through a comparison of Celan's first draft of the translation, in 1956, with his final versions in late 1957. This comparison illustrates how Celan's translation process gradually distances the new version from the original, which occurs in tandem with an increase in poetological reflection. It thus appears that the temporal break between these drafts marks a caesura in the development of Celan's translation work. In 1956 he still appears concerned to reflect closely the structure and sense of Éluard's original poem (so recalling his treatment of Éluard's poems from *Capitale de la douleur*, in the 1940s), while in 1957 the thematisation of his own poetological concerns counters and threatens to overwhelm the original poem. In this respect, Ute Harbusch's designation of Celan's translations, including 'Nous avons fait la nuit', as 'Gegen-übersetzungen' provides an appropriate and fruitful description of the translation process. Nevertheless, while Harbusch views 'Nous avons fait la nuit' as an illustration of Celan's existing poetic theories, I argue that it represents an early version of those ideas that came to fruition in Celan's Büchner Prize speech, and so I posit the translation as not just illustrative but also as constitutive of the development of Celan's poetics.

In the context of this study, the poetological elements of the translation are most significant, insofar as they contribute to an understanding of the interaction between Celan's poetics and translation work. However, the representation of the love relationship in the translation intersects with Celan's own biography, which therefore contributes an additional layer to the poem. Although such a biographical reading risks reducing the range of expression and meaning of any poem, the issues that it presents in terms of the apparently dual status of the addressee supports the poetological reading. These biographical elements will therefore be addressed after the poetological

coordinates of the translation have been examined.

The draft of Celan's translation of Éluard's poem of 1956 reads:

Paul Éluard, Nous avons fait la nuit

zuwege gebracht

Wir haben begangen die Nacht
Meine Hand hält die deine ich wache
Ich halte dich empor mit allen meinen Kräften²⁵
~~Ich ritz in Felsgestein deiner Kräfte Stern~~
Deiner Kräfte Stern ich ritz ihn in Felsgestein
Die tiefen Furchen drin dein sanfter Körper keimt
Ich sag ~~mi wie~~ deine beiden Stimmen mir her, die ~~öffentliche~~ heimliche,
die ~~laute~~
Und jetzt noch lach ich über die Stolze
Mit der du umgehst wie mit einer Bettlerin
Lach ich über die Irren, denen du Ehrfurcht entgegenbringst
Über die Schlichten²⁶
Und im Innern meines Kopfes, der sich leise in Einklang bringt mit
dem deinen, in Einklang bringt mit der Nacht
Bestaun ich, ein Verzückter, die Unbekannte, zu der du nun wirst
Die Unbekannte die dir gleicht, in allem, was mir lieb ist, gleicht,
~~Und~~ dem immer neuen.

The version that Celan wrote in December 1957, and which was published in early 1959, is given in full below. The three drafts of this final version, also dated December 1957, are reproduced in the appendices.

NOUS AVONS FAIT LA NUIT

²⁵ Two alternative translations for this line are noted at the end of this handwritten draft: 'Mit allen Kräften halte ich dich empor'; 'Ich leih dir Halt aus allen Kräften'.

²⁶ The translation of this line is incomplete.

Die Nacht ist begangen, ich halt deine Hand,
ich wache, ich stütz dich
mit all meinen Kräften.
Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte
Stern in den Stein: deines Körpers
Gütigsein – hier
soll es keimen und aufgehn.
Ich sage mir deine
Stimmen vor, beide, die heimliche und
die von allen gehörte.
Ich lache, ich seh dich
der Stolzen begegnen, als bettelte sie, ich seh dich, du bringst
den Umnachteten Ehrfurcht entgegen, du gehst
zu den Einfachen hin – du badest.
Leise
stimm ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimm sie
in eins mit der Nacht, fühl jetzt
das Wunder dahinter: du wirst mir
zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir, du gleichst
allem Geliebten, du bist
anders von Mal zu Mal.

(a) Poetic duality

The first line of Celan's translation from 1956 reads: 'Wir haben begangen die Nacht'. The use of the verb 'begehen' both reflects Éluard's poem as well as detaching it from the original. The meaning of this verb remains elusive, since it is highly context-dependent, with meanings ranging from celebration to malevolence. Grimms' dictionary gives several definitions, including 'begraben' and 'feiern'. In addition, the first semantic field with which the verb is associated in Grimms' dictionary is copulation.²⁷ In this

²⁷ Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, I, 1284-88.

context, Celan's use of this verb resonates with the erotic connotations of Éluard's phrase 'Nous avons fait la nuit', hinting at the consummation of the relationship. And so in this respect, the German version reflects the original poem. Yet the additional, negative connotations of 'begehen' simultaneously detach Celan's version from the original poem, since the verb can also mean 'etwas Übles verüben', the principal collocations of this definition being indiscretion, error, betrayal, crime, sin and suicide.²⁸ The verb 'begehen' thereby connotes both the tone of celebration and the indication of sexual relations evoked by Éluard's poem, as well as a negative element: the semantic field of error, crime and betrayal.²⁹

One side of this opposition, the celebration of the love relationship, is intensified in Celan's version. In his draft from 1956, Celan retains most of Éluard's syntax and structure, yet the three drafts from 1957 gradually restructure the poem until it is visually very different from the original French poem.³⁰ This restructuring shifts the emphasis onto different images, and inserts a sense of space and silence that often seems to intensify the impression of the speaker's love. For example, the corporeal imagery evoked in Éluard's description of his beloved's body is accentuated in Celan's version. In Éluard's poem, the phrase 'la bonté de ton corps' is enclosed within the rest of the line, so that the emphasis rests on the beginning and end of the line: 'sillons profonds [...] germera'. Celan's restructuring of this line separates the body image over two lines, emphasising it through enjambement: 'deines Körpers / Gütigsein'. Moreover, the nominal form of the adjective 'gütig' gives the impression of individual existence: 'das Sein'. The word that follows this noun, 'hier', is emphasised as a result of its isolation

²⁸ These definitions are from the *Duden Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch*, 3rd edn (Mannheim: Duden, 1996), p. 220.

²⁹ In her analysis of this translation, Harbusch notes that Celan's use of the verb 'begehen' has a 'zwiespältigen Klang'. Harbusch, p. 157.

³⁰ Olschner marks out this poem in particular as one of the few versions by Celan where the original poem has been completely restructured. Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, pp. 102-03.

between a dash and a line break, in a line of only two words. While, in Éluard's poem, the image is of germination taking place in the 'sillons profonds', Celan's syntax and punctuation reduce these obvious links. The 'hier' may thus initially, or additionally, appear to refer to the body. So this point in the poem, the solitary 'hier', focuses attention on the moment of physical union between the speaker and the addressee, as the syntax clears a space within the stream of words for this union.

A similar pause in the poem is created by line 15 of Celan's translation, the single word 'Leise'. This moment of stillness and quiet marks a break in the poem between the evocation of the addressee's relationship with others (lines 12-14), and the assertion of the unity of the speaker and addressee (lines 16-17). The mass of images and associations that have populated the previous lines are replaced by this single word, and so once again a space is created that allows the poem to return to its focus, the union between the speaker and the addressee. The poem appears to be solely concerned with the 'here and now' of this union, as is suggested by the insertion of the term 'jetzt' in line 16.

However, as exemplified by the ambiguity of the verb 'begehen', the celebration of love is juxtaposed throughout 'Nous avons fait la nuit' with other intimations, such as that of death. The following close reading of the poem demonstrates how such new connotations arise from a combination of Celan's syntactical and lexical choices and the so-called semantic shifts that certain German terms in the poem have undergone. The translation thus illustrates the theory of linguistic change which underlies both 'Edgar Jené' and the Bremen Speech. Since the concept of the semantic shift represents permanent evolution, by indicating that the meaning of a word or phrase may change continually depending on its context, I argue that this version illustrates the theory of permanent flux that is fundamental to Celan's poetics in *Der Meridian*. Moreover, I show

that the translation also self-reflexively thematises this idea of permanent flux, since it articulates its own permanent difference.

The scholar and translator into French of Celan's poetry, Jean Bollack, also considers the concept of the semantic shift to be central to 'Nous avons fait la nuit', which he treats as a case study of Celan's translation work.³¹ For Bollack, Celan's translations do not replace the original text, but announce its re-location in a new realm, and so mark the difference from the original text. He argues that Celan's translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is paradigmatic of this kind of transformation:

J'ai relevé une application impressionnante de ce principe de réfection négatrice dans la traduction d'un poème d'Éluard, "Nous avons fait la nuit", où, d'une expérience nocturne à l'autre, les ordres se déplacent, si bien que l'épiphanie souveraine, le triomphe de la femme aimée dans le poème d'Éluard, rejoint la mémoire des massacres, inséparables des nuits de la mort.³²

However, Bollack's detailed analysis of the translation does not reflect this conclusion. Instead, he uses the translation's dual structure to illustrate his conception of Celan's whole poetic oeuvre as representative of a dialogue between two facets of the poet: the 'ich' as the historical subject, existing outside of language; and the 'du' as the lyrical subject, the speaker's alter-ego who speaks within the poem but does not exist beyond it. Bollack argues that the speaker and addressee can be identified thus in many of Celan's own poems.³³ Yet by restricting 'Nous avons fait la nuit' to this interpretation he no

³¹ Jean Bollack, 'Le traducteur', in *Poésie contre poésie. Celan et la littérature* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), pp. 168-76. This section of Bollack's book was originally published as a separate article on Celan's translation work in general, without specific reference to 'Nous avons fait la nuit': Bollack, 'Celan, le poète traducteur', *Librarium. Zeitschrift der schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft*, 3 (1997), 216-19.

³² Bollack, *Poésie contre poésie*, p. 169.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 175. Bollack's chapter on Celan's translation of Éluard's poems is a revised compilation of two articles, both published in the 1990s, the first of which deals more generally with Celan's

longer allows the poem's 'ich' and 'du' to represent lovers, and so does not develop his idea that the poem binds a love relationship with an intimation of death.

Semantic shifts occur not only as a result of the historical past and its impact on language, as Bollack argues, but also through Celan's use of certain terms in his theoretical texts. These terms thereby take on a poetological charge, which impacts on their significance for the informed reader of Celan's works when these words surface in other texts, such as in Celan's translations. Such a connection between the terms of Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' and his poetological terminology becomes evident only when looking at Celan's oeuvre as a whole, and particularly at the terms and ideas contained in his *Meridian* speech. Although this speech was given two years after Celan completed his translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', the striking increase in poetological associations in the drafts of this translation from 1957, in comparison to the version from 1956, suggests that the poetological theories expressed in *Der Meridian* had begun to take shape by 1957. Since the two levels of semantic change in the translation, the one brought about by Celan's lexical interventions and the other a result of semantic shifts, tend to intertwine in the poem, they will not be treated separately in the following analysis. Instead, the poetological connotations of selected points in the translation will be explored, incorporating a consideration of both levels of semantic change.

(i) Graben

Line 3 of Éluard's poem already contains a metapoetic, or meta-artistic, image, in the form of engraving on a rock: 'Je grave sur un roc l'étoile de tes forces'. Celan's translation greatly intensifies this metapoetic element. The principal changes revealed by the drafts

translation work, and the second specifically with his translations of Éluard's poem. That the two sections of this chapter were conceived separately is evident in the apparently differing approaches to the subject within Bollack's discussion.

are the line break, and the rendering of 'je grave' and 'sillons profonds':

- 1956: Deiner Kräfte Stern ich ritz ihn in Felsgestein / Die tiefen
 Furchen
- 1957 (1): Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte / Stern in den Gestein:
- 1957 (2): Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte / Stern in den Stein:³⁴

Celan's initial translation of the verb 'graver' as 'ritzen' retains the original sense of engraving. Furthermore, this verb suggests a parallel between this version and Celan's poem 'Stimmen', which was written on July 21 and 22 1956, thus potentially in the same period as this first draft translation.³⁵ The first two lines of this poem read: 'Stimmen, ins Grün / Der Wasserfläche geritzt' (I, 147). The etching of voices into the surface of the water at the opening of the poem implies vocal inscription: the transformation of the audible (voices) into the visible (writing).³⁶ According to this analysis, the use of the verb 'ritzen' in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' would reflect Éluard's apparent association of poetic writing with his declaration of love for the addressee: 'Je grave sur un roc l'étoile de tes forces'. For in both cases, the emotional realm is expressed through a physical image. Christine Ivanović's reading of 'Stimmen' also takes account of the reiteration of the verb 'ritzen' in the poem's final lines, where it is now also associated with wounding: 'ein / Fruchtblatt, augengroß, tief / geritzt; es / harzt, will nicht / vernarben' (I, 149).³⁷ As such, the use of this verb in the translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' simultaneously connotes both love and violence.

³⁴ The dates (1956 and 1957) refer to Celan's composition of the drafts of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', and the numbers (1), (2) and (3) to the sequence of drafts in 1957, which display the gradual development of Celan's translation.

³⁵ Celan, 'Stimmen', in *Die Gedichte. Kommentierte Ausgabe*, ed. by Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 644. Harbusch (*Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 155) dates the first draft of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' as spring 1956.

³⁶ Christine Ivanović, 'Stimmen', in Jürgen Lehmann (ed), *Sprachgitter*, pp. 73-107 (p. 81 and p. 106).

³⁷ Ivanović, 'Stimmen', p. 81 and p. 106.

In Celan's version of 1957, the verb 'ritzen' is replaced by 'graben', which no longer evokes an artwork but is still consonant with the violence suggested by the verb 'ritzen' at the end of the poem 'Stimmen'. While 'eingraben' is a conventional rendering of the French 'graver', the removal of the prefix transforms the verb from an evocation of engraving to that of digging, an act that is also evoked by the addition of the phrase 'tiefes Gefurch' immediately after this verb. The wide-ranging historical and poetological connotations of this image require further exploration.

The noun 'das Gefurch' is an archaic term referring to a shared agricultural furrow. Thus, despite being a singular noun, it also implies duality.³⁸ In his first attempt at translating this poem Celan rendered the French 'sillons' as the more conventional plural noun 'Furchen', so evoking the same image of furrows and bodily imagery as in the French poem. Indeed, Celan also used the term 'Furchen' to refer to wrinkles in his translation of Shakespeare's sonnet II in 1961, to translate the phrase 'deep trenches in thy beauty's field', which refers to the process of ageing that the beloved will inevitably undergo: 'der Schönheit Flur voll Furchen' (V, 318-19). By contrast, the shift from 'Furchen' to 'Gefurch' in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' distances the image from the corporeal realm and instead moves towards an indication of distance, through the archaism, and towards the impression of singularity, through the singular noun. The image is no longer of physical wrinkles, nor of several furrows engraved into a rock, but of a singular furrow that has been dug. The intimation of a grave is unmistakeable, and is further invited by the aural and visual association of 'ich grabe' with the noun 'Grab'.

This evocation of death is accompanied by that of memorialisation by the conjunction of the terms 'grabe' (line 4) and 'Stein' (line 5), which create the image of a gravestone

³⁸ Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, IV,1/ii, 2191-92.

(‘Grabstein’), or of the Jewish tradition of placing stones on graves *in memoriam*. The final words of Celan’s translation compound this apparent allusion to memorialisation: ‘von Mal zu Mal’. Celan used the term ‘jedesmal’ in the draft of 1956, yet the rewriting of this phrase as ‘von Mal zu Mal’ allows the image of a ‘Mal’ to emerge more prominently at the end of the poem. In the context of the image of the gravestone, this noun also evokes a memorial (‘Denkmal’ or ‘Mahnmal’).³⁹

The drafts of this translation show that Celan’s rendering of the French noun ‘roc’ is gradually pared down from geologically precise terms to the more general ‘Stein’. Celan translated ‘roc’ as ‘Felsgestein’ in 1956 and as ‘Gestein’ in the first draft in 1957. Both of these German nouns are technical geological terms, the first referring to solid rock and the second to a rock stratum. Since the French word ‘roc’ would translate most directly as ‘Felsen’, the term ‘Felsgestein’ both reproduces ‘roc’ but also reflects Celan’s poetological concern with the import of rock formations. As discussed, Celan shared with Mandelstam the association of geological imagery with a palimpsestic conception of the simultaneity of different periods of time. This connection to Mandelstam’s poetics is made yet more manifest in Celan’s final version of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’, in which the word ‘roc’ is rendered simply as ‘Stein’. The title of Mandelstam’s first volume of poetry translates into German as ‘Der Stein’ (1912) and the image of the stone is indeed of central importance to his poetics. The materiality and weight of the stone represents the idea that poetry should reflect material existence, which was a central tenet of the poetic movement to which Mandelstam belonged, Acmeism.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cf. Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 160.

⁴⁰ The acmeist movement was a school of poetry in Russia between approximately 1910 and 1920, of which other principal members were Nikolai Gumilyov, Sergei Gorodetsky and Anna Akhmatova. The movement was conceived as an alternative to the mysticism and ambiguity of the Symbolist movement, and thus aimed principally for a clear and strict style, after the classical model. Acmeist forms of expression aimed at materiality in the sense of a close relation to the world of objects, and thus tended to focus on the image rather than on the symbol. See Ivanović’s analysis of Celan’s radio

A connection between the concept of the stone in Celan's and Mandelstam's poetics is also evident in a preparatory note for the *Meridian* speech:

Der Stein, das Anorganische, Mineralische, ist das ältere, das aus der tiefsten Zeitschicht, **aus der Vorwelt – die auch des Menschen Vorwelt ist**, dem Menschen Entgegen- und Gegenüberstehende. Der Stein ist das Andere, Außermenschliche, ~~sein~~ mit seinem Schweigen gibt er dem Sprechenden Richtung und Raum. (M 98/195; Celan's underlining)⁴¹

The location of the stone in the deepest temporal layer parallels Mandelstam's description of poetry as a plough, which brings the knowledge of the past ('die untersten Zeitschichten [...], die "Schwarzerde der Zeit"') into the present (M 219). When Celan's citation of Mandelstam's words is read alongside his poetological note on stone, it is notable that he locates both the stone and the 'Schwarzerde der Zeit' in the deepest temporal layers, implying that they are analogous to one another. Celan's use of the terms 'Gestein' and 'Stein', as opposed to a more direct translation of 'roc', in his 1957 versions of Éluard's poem, thus reflect the parallels between his writing and Mandelstam's poetics, so positing a point of convergence between Éluard, Celan and Mandelstam. Moreover, the image of the agricultural furrow, 'Gefurch', in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' reflects Mandelstam's plough image. As a result of these additional poetological connotations, the poem's image of digging into stone ('Ich grabe [...] in den Stein') reflects both the corporeal realm of Éluard's poem as well as an additional reference to the relationship between poetry and time. The speaker is not only engraving on the stone but is digging into it, laying bare the layers of time through his poetic expression.

essay on Mandelstam for a more detailed discussion of the acmeist movement and of the status of the stone image in Mandelstam's aesthetics. Ivanović, *Das Gedicht im Geheimnis der Begegnung*, pp. 323-60.

⁴¹ Here, the reference M 98/195 denotes the page number on which the note is found, followed by the number of the note. All subsequent references will use this format. Words and phrases in bold indicate that they were inserted by Celan into an existing manuscript or typescript.

(ii) Beide Stimmen

Celan inserts the word 'beide' into the translation (line 9), for which there is not an equivalent in Éluard's poem, and furthermore emphasises it by isolating it between two commas: 'Ich sage mir deine / Stimmen vor, beide, die heimliche und / die von allen gehörte.' Since both voices evidently belong to one individual, the emphasis of this immanent duality highlights the notion that two forms can be subsumed into one figure. In the context of the act of translation, these two voices can represent the two texts, or two languages, which are simultaneously separate and unified.

This metapoetic element, whereby the new version seems to comment on the nature of translation itself, is developed in Celan's rendering of another expression of duality in Éluard's poem: 'Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d'accord avec la tienne avec la nuit'. This doubling is perceived by the speaker to be marvellous ('je m'émerveille') because it appears to happen without his intervention. Celan's initial version of this line maintains the sense of passivity: 'Und im Innern meines Kopfes, der sich leise in Einklang bringt mit dem deinen, in Einklang bringt mit der Nacht.' As in the French poem, the harmonising seems to occur inside the speaker's head without any conscious intervention on his part. However, the next draft, in 1957, effects a radical change by introducing the first-person pronoun, 'ich', thus rendering the speaker more active. This change distances the image from an intimation of surrealist surrender to the Unconscious (and therefore from a particularly Freudian view of the Unconscious), and makes it a possible metapoetic commentary on the nature of translation: 'Leise / stimme ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimme / sie in eins mit der Nacht.' The image suggests that translation involves the active tuning of one language, along with its entire connotative sphere, into another. The rest of Celan's phrase indicates that this encounter between the two languages and connotative spheres creates an entirely new text: '[ich] fühle jetzt / das

Wunder dahinter'. 'Das Wunder dahinter' may therefore be understood to be the poem itself, the 'miracle' that is created by the synchronisation of two languages and texts.

This concept of encounter is intensified in the evocation of two voices in Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. The phrase 'die von allen gehörte', forming an entire line, is amplified beyond any connotation that Éluard's term 'publique' could have. This German phrase suggests a more intense exchange between the addressee and the outside world than is evident in Éluard's poem. Such exchange is amplified further by Celan in his translation of the lines that follow. Lines eleven to fourteen of the German version contain three distinct verbs connoting approach and meeting: 'begegnen', 'entgegenbringen' and 'hingehen'. This lexical field is absent in the original poem, and indeed also in Celan's draft of 1956. The change in the versions of 1957 reflects the increased poetological content of the translation, since it reflects the issue of encounter that is so fundamental to Celan's poetics. In Éluard's poem, the principal encounter is between the addressee and 'l'orgueilleuse', 'les fous' and 'les simples'. By contrast, an additional level of encounter is introduced in the German version through the two-fold repetition of the phrase 'ich seh dich'.⁴²

This emphasis on sight reflects Éluard's own concern with vision, in his theory that the perception of reality is contingent on the moment of communication between the viewer and the object to be viewed. As such, Celan's emphasis of the moment of visual perception ('ich seh dich') sets up a connection between his version of 'Nous avons fait

⁴² Harbusch connects this evocation of vision, which she identifies in several of Celan's other translations from this period, to Arthur Rimbaud's concept of the poet as 'voyant', but not to Éluard's notion of vision as exchange and interchangeability. See Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 160 and pp. 272-74. A connection to Éluard's poetics is nevertheless invited, firstly by the simple fact that Celan is translating a poem by Éluard, and secondly by the images of exchange that suffuse the rest of the poem and that Celan intensifies in his version. Moreover, according to Huppert, Celan explicitly rejected the concept of the poet as 'voyant' in a conversation between the two writers. Huppert, p. 321.

la nuit' and this aspect of Éluard's surrealist theory. Indeed, one of Celan's poetological notes seems to echo this equation of the poetic image with vision: 'Bild = Vision (nicht: Metapher)' (M 109/277). These few words speak volumes about Celan's poetics. By privileging vision over metaphor, Celan emphasises both the central significance of external reality in his conception of poetry (as opposed to metaphorical representations, which traditionally replace real objects with equivalent images), and the channelling of that reality through visual perception. This emphasis on seeing in turn suggests that reality may be re-created each time that the seeing individual enters into a new relationship with the object of perception, so paralleling Éluard's concern with vision.⁴³

Moreover, while the speaker retreats at this point in Éluard's poem, he is persistently present in Celan's version, as the pronoun 'ich' occurs three times: 'Ich lache, ich seh dich / [...], ich seh dich'. The relationship between the speaker and the addressee thus remains in the foreground in Celan's version, a reflection of the centrality of this constellation in his poetics, and appearing to suggest the lesser significance of these relationships between the addressee and others that are privileged in Éluard's poem.

Bollack links the image of a 'secret' voice ('deine Stimmen [...] die heimliche') in Celan's evocation of voices in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' to the concept of a hermetic idiom.⁴⁴ While this may indeed be one of the connotations of the term 'heimlich', it also evokes the words 'Geheimnis' and 'Heim', which are both central to Celan's poetics, and both significant in the context of translation as poetic encounter. It has already been established that the evocation of dual figures in this translation (the dual voice ['beide

⁴³ Pennone (p. 218) mentions this poetological note in a footnote to her discussion of metaphor, and asserts that Celan's use of the term 'Bild' recalls Breton's definition of the surrealist image in his first manifesto.

⁴⁴ 'La contre-langue intime est l'idiomatique, la "celanienne", c'est la secrète, l'hermétique, celle que le lecteur doit apprendre'. Bollack, *Poésie contre poésie*, p. 174.

Stimmen'] and the two 'Stirne') alludes to the translation as a double, an individual text that stands in dialogue with the original text, and that therefore evokes the concept of encounter. The addition of the term 'heimlich' to this notion of encounter recalls Celan's description of poetry in *Der Meridian* as existing 'im Geheimnis der Begegnung':

Das Gedicht ist einsam. Es ist einsam und unterwegs. Wer es schreibt, bleibt ihm mitgegeben.

Aber steht das Gedicht nicht gerade dadurch, also schon hier, in der Begegnung – *im Geheimnis der Begegnung?*

Das Gedicht will zu einem Andern, es braucht dieses Andere, es braucht ein Gegenüber. Es sucht es auf, es spricht sich ihm zu. (III, 198; Celan's emphasis)

The position of the phrase 'Geheimnis der Begegnung' in *Der Meridian* suggests that it is key to Celan's conception of the poem as both individual (written according to its own concerns) and existing in conjunction with other impulses. The full import of this phrase emerges when it is considered that the term 'Geheimnis' originates from the concept of home. The fact that the private sphere of the home, described as 'das Heim' or 'heimlich', constituted the opposite of the public realm led to the lexical field of 'home' being employed to designate the opposite of 'public'.⁴⁵ As a result, from the seventeenth century onwards the terms 'Geheimnis' and 'heimlich' came to mean 'hidden' or 'secret'.⁴⁶ This reading of the term distances it from Bollack's concept of hermeticism (a description of his poetry that Celan himself consistently rejected) and brings it closer to

⁴⁵ The meaning of 'heimlich' as 'homely', and the connection of both of these to the term 'Geheimnis', is evident in Kafka's story 'Heimkehr', in which the narrator describes his return to his parents' home, apparently after a long absence. The narrative contains the question 'Ist dir heimlich, fühlst du dich zu Hause?', and the final sentence reads: 'Wie wäre es, wenn jetzt jemand die Tür öffnete und mich etwas fragte. Wäre ich dann nicht selbst wie einer, der sein Geheimnis wahren will?' Kafka, 'Heimkehr', in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Max Brod, 8 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983), VII: 'Beschreibung eines Kampfes. Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlaß', 107.

⁴⁶ See the definitions of 'geheim' and 'geheimnis' in Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, IV/1/ii, 2351 and 2360.

Celan's own poetics, to which the notion of 'home' and 'homecoming' is central. The phrase 'das Gedicht im Geheimnis der Begegnung', can thus suggest that poetry is the path towards making something one's own through encounter.

This relationship between poetry and home seems to be confirmed in *Der Meridian* by Celan's characterisation of the act of writing poetry as a form of homecoming, the realisation of which results in part from the affirmation of links between one's own poetry and that of others (also characterised as an 'encounter'). In this context of shared poetic space, the 'Geheimnis der Begegnung' refers to the encounter between two poets in the form of similar images, such as that between Celan and Büchner in 'Stimmen'. This encounter is 'secret' because it is unintended and not initially noticed by the poet. If the term 'homely' ('heimlich') is understood in this way in 'Nous avons fait la nuit', then the elision between this 'homely' voice and the public voice suggests that translation also represents an encounter that results in appropriation. The translation is thus also 'das Gedicht [...] im Geheimnis der Begegnung'. This appropriation is not passive but constructive, a way of making familiar that which is strange, while still retaining an awareness of its strangeness. The further implications of this conjunction of poetic encounter and homecoming in Celan's poetics are examined in the following chapter.

A further conjunction with Büchner is suggested by the appearance of the word 'dahinter' in the final versions of Celan's translation, which recalls both 'Edgar Jené' and Büchner's *Dantons Tod* (1835). The image of breaking through a forehead in order to access what lies behind it is evoked by the character of Danton in the following exchange with his wife, Julie, in the first scene of the play:

JULIE. Du kennst mich, Danton.

DANTON. Ja, was man so kennen heißt. Du hast dunkle Augen und lockiges Haar und einen feinen Teint und sagst immer zu mir: lieb Georg. Aber *er deutet ihr auf Stirn und Augen* da da, was liegt hinter dem? [...] Wir müßten uns die Schädeldecken aufbrechen und die Gedanken einander aus den Hirnfasern zerren.⁴⁷

This image of the attempt to achieve genuine knowledge of an other by breaking through their surface appearance, which is by implication deceptive, is strikingly similar to Celan's imagery in 'Edgar Jené'. In that text, the speaker must break through the 'Meeresspiegel', and disavow the evidence of his visual perception, in order to reach an accurate understanding of what he sees. As discussed above, this notion of breaking through barriers is replicated in Celan's later poetological texts, notably in his reference to Mandelstam's image of poetry as a plough.

The appearance of the term 'dahinter' in Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit' thus draws together Celan's early poetological text, 'Edgar Jené', and *Dantons Tod* and so also Celan's *Meridian* speech, which is itself based largely on considerations of Büchner's texts, in particular *Dantons Tod*. This conjunction of intertexts inserts new potential meanings into 'Nous avons fait la nuit', since it links the image of the forehead to the idea of perception. As such, a difference between Éluard's poem and Celan's version becomes evident. In the original poem, the speaker describes how he marvels at the change undergone by the addressee, since she becomes 'inconnue' and yet also 'semblable à toi'. Celan's first attempt at translating this poem, in 1956, produces a similar configuration, whereby both the speaker and the addressee appear to be transformed. The speaker becomes 'ein Verzückerter' and the addressee 'die Unbekannte': 'Bestaun ich, ein Verzückerter, die

⁴⁷ Georg Büchner, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. by Werner R. Lehmann, 4 vols (Hamburg: Wegner, 1967), I, 8-75 (p. 9). In his reading of Celan's poem 'Frankfurt, September' (1965; II, 114), Nägele (p. 136) comments on a similarity between the phrasing of lines 5 and 6, 'Dahinter, klagegerastert, / tut sich Freuds Stirn auf', and this exchange in *Dantons Tod*.

Unbekannte, zu der du nun wirst'. By stark contrast, in the final version of Celan's poem the marvel is attributed not to the speaker's response to the change in the addressee, but to the change itself, which is designated 'ein Wunder'.

Moreover, this miracle is depicted as happening behind the speaker's forehead, that is, inside his own head, and therefore as having nothing directly to do with the addressee herself. On this account, the idea of perception becomes central to this section of the poem, and the miraculous fact is the addressee's dual identity, both different and the same: 'du wirst mir / zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir'. So in contrast to the sense of the original poem, in which the event is described not as a miracle *per se*, but as the cause of marvelling ('je m'émerveille'), and where the addressee is not the same as but similar to herself ('semblable à toi'), the German version depicts a miracle that is constituted of the realisation of simultaneous sameness and difference.

This concept of the synchronisation of two or more diverse elements in order to create a new form is also present in Celan's insertion of the opening phrase of Éluard's poem as the title of his translation: 'Nous avons fait la nuit'.⁴⁸ In her analysis of this translation, Harbusch asserts that the title is an expression of homage to Éluard.⁴⁹ Indeed, the phrase 'nous avons fait la nuit' recalls the erotic image 'nous avons fait l'amour', and so by including this phrase Celan alludes to these associations, aligning his poem with Éluard's. However, the title does not suggest such a straightforward act of homage, for the French citation also marks the translation's distance from the original, by making an explicit issue

⁴⁸ Celan's drafts of this translation contain the title 'Nous avons fait la nuit', confirming that the title was an integral part of the translation, and not added to the final version by Celan, nor by the editor of the published version.

⁴⁹ Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 155. However, in 1962 Celan wrote that he had once paid homage to Éluard, through his translation of poems from his volume *Capitale de la douleur*. By mentioning these unpublished translations, and not his published translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', Celan implies that the latter translation was not conceived as homage to the French poet. See Chapter 3, in which Celan's letter to Hubert Juin (November 1962) is cited.

of the nature of translation. The relationship between the title and the first line establishes a dialogue between two languages and between two poems. This bilingual encounter invites a comparison with Celan's comments on bilingualism, in a reply to a questionnaire from the Librairie Flinker in 1961. Asked to comment on the 'Problem der Zweisprachigkeit', Celan responded:

An Zweisprachigkeit in der Dichtung glaube ich nicht. Doppelzüngigkeit – ja, das gibt es, auch in diversen zeitgenössischen Wortkünsten bzw. -kunststücken, zumal in solchen, die sich, in freudiger Übereinstimmung mit dem jeweiligen Kulturkonsum, genauso polyglott wie polychrom zu etablieren wissen. (III, 175)

Celan's reference to 'Doppelzüngigkeit' implies that some poets and artists cynically use polyglot and polychrome media in order to adapt to the current mood of the culture industry. The implication is that the multi-lingual, multi-coloured nature of such a work of art is not intrinsic to the work's meaning, but is added in order to appeal to the tastes of consumers.⁵⁰ That Celan made this reference to insincere duplicity in the literary world also suggests an allusion to the so-called Goll Affair, which had entered the public sphere in earnest in 1960, a year before Celan responded to this questionnaire, and during which Celan had seen critics turn against him on the basis of scant evidence.

However, the final section of Celan's response to the questionnaire returns to a more purely poetological level:

⁵⁰ Cindy Mackey reads Celan's comments on 'Doppelzüngigkeit' as a condemnation of so-called concrete poetry, arguing that Celan rejects the impersonal nature of this style of poetry and its apparent detachment from reality. Mackey, *Dichter der Bezogenheit: A study of Paul Celan's Poetry with special reference to 'Die Niemandsrose'* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1997), p. 65. For a definition of concrete poetry, see *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*, ed. by Mary Garland, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 480. Eugen Gomringer, considered to have founded the movement, has edited an anthology of concrete poems: *konkrete poesie. Deutschsprachige autoren* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972).

Dichtung – das ist das schicksalhaft Einmalige der Sprache. Also nicht – erlauben Sie mir diese Binsenwahrheit: Dichtung sieht sich ja heutzutage, wie die Wahrheit, nur allzuoft in die Binsen gehen – also nicht das Zweimalige.

This final statement could initially appear to be an assertion of the impossibility of translating poetry, for if a poem constitutes a unique event, then its repetition in another language would appear to be impossible. However, Celan's lasting commitment to translation, almost exclusively of poetry, is incompatible with such an attitude to the possibility of translation. Instead, Celan's use of the phrase 'Nous avons fait la nuit' as the title of his translation of Éluard's poem shows that it is possible for a poem to be at once bilingual and unique. Indeed, it is the poem's bilingual nature that makes it unique, since the disjuncture between the French title and the German poem marks the poem as a new and different version of the original poem.⁵¹ Moreover, in an echo of Celan's translation of Desnos's 'Le dernier poème', the French original figures as a spectral presence in the translation, in that its truncated first line features as the title. The French citation, 'Nous avons fait la nuit', thus marks the poem's similarity to the original, in that it is a version of that poem, and at the same time asserts its difference from that original, since it is a new version.

This concept that a poem may be reproduced in a new context, such as a new linguistic context in translation, and therefore be both the same as and different from the original text, is expressed at two points in the translation: in the insertion of deictic terms and the alteration of the final line. The words 'hier' and 'jetzt' occur in Celan's version (lines 6, 16

⁵¹ I therefore agree with Markus May's interpretation of this response to the Librairie Flinker as being consonant with Celan's utterances, in *Der Meridian* and elsewhere, about the uniqueness of poetry, and the role of translation in marking its difference from the original text. Markus May, *Ein Klaffen, das sich sichtbar macht*. *Untersuchungen zu Paul Celans Übersetzungen amerikanischer Lyrik* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004), pp. 75-77.

and 17), and yet there are no equivalents for these words in the original poem. Moreover, these terms are only present in the later drafts of Celan's translation, and in the published version the word 'hier' is also emphasised through syntactical isolation:

1956: Die tiefen Furchen drin dein sanfter Körper keimt
1957 (1): Stern in den Gestein: hier soll / deines Leibes Gütigsein aufgehen
1957 (3): Stern in den Gestein: deines Körpers / Gütigsein – hier / soll es
keimen und aufgehen.

Celan's insertion of these terms appears as a distinct poetological allusion, in particular when read in conjunction with his *Meridian* speech, as in the following statement: 'Noch im Hier und Jetzt des Gedichts [...] läßt es das ihm, dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen: dessen Zeit' (III, 198-99). This part of the speech can be interpreted as suggesting that the uniqueness of the poem arises from its dialogue with the 'Other', in that it constantly allows other times to enter into the poem's sphere. As a result of this dialogue, the poem is repeatedly reinvented. By inserting the terms 'hier' and 'jetzt' into his translation, Celan marks it out as representing the current manifestation of Éluard's original poem, and yet suggests that this version is not definitive, but in constant flux as its relationship to other times changes.⁵²

This impression of constant flux, so that the emphasis is not on novelty but on difference, is expressed in the final line. Here, the implication is that it is not possible to refer to the translation as the 'new' manifestation of Éluard's poem. Rather, the poem portrays itself as one unique point in a series of unique moments. The first draft of the translation maintains the impression of permanent renewal in Éluard's poem by rendering the line 'Qui est toujours nouveau' as 'Dem immer neuen'. The alterations

⁵² Cf. Harbusch (*Gegenübersetzungen*, p. 160), who also notes the prominence of the terms 'hier' and 'jetzt' in Celan's other translations from this period.

made to the second draft, in 1957, show Celan's gradual movement away from this concept of renewal and towards that of difference:

- 1957 (1): du bist / jedesmal anders und neu
1957 (2): du bist / anders von Mal zu Mal

Having seemingly at first reproduced Éluard's celebration of his beloved's permanent renewal, in the second draft Celan appears to reject the possibility of novelty, instead insisting on permanent difference. This expression of difference suggests two poetological concepts. Firstly, it evokes the concept of a symbiotic relationship between the past and the present, and the expression of this relationship in language. According to this principle, an entirely new text or language is impossible, because it will always bear the marks and scars of the past. Indeed, the repeated term 'Mal' in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' also evokes the image of a mark. And as a result of this marking, language, and therefore the poem, are in a state of constant flux. In Celan's words, the poem is 'anders von Mal zu Mal'.

This concept of the past becoming visible in the present has also been identified, by association, in the image of a 'Gefurch' earlier in the same poem. Secondly, the phrase 'anders von Mal zu Mal' suggests a series of different moments, rather than a process of constant renewal, as indicated by Éluard's poem.⁵³ So the impossibility of novelty leads to the assertion of repeated difference, whereby the poem is constantly recreated as it enters into new constellations with other times and readers. Schulz argues that a focus on novelty replaces a sense of history in Celan's essay 'Edgar Jené', since in that text 'das Neue' replaces 'das Ursprüngliche'.⁵⁴ However, the translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit'

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 159-60.

⁵⁴ Schulz, p. 32.

suggests that by this point in Celan's poetic development novelty has also been undermined as too positive a concept for his poetic universe. Rather, the element of 'Edgar Jené' that is still perceptible in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is that of permanent change ('unausgesetzte Verwandlung').

(iii) Die Nacht

The diverse coordinates of the image of the night in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' also impacts on the poem's poetological connotations. Celan emphasises the term 'Nacht' through his restructuring of the opening phrase of the translation, changing 'Die Nacht' from the object to the subject of the sentence: 'Wir haben begangen die Nacht' becomes 'Die Nacht ist begangen'. Jürgen Lütz connects the image of the night to the Holocaust past in one of Celan's versions of a poem by Mandelstam.⁵⁵ In 1959, Celan published a collection of translations of Mandelstam's poems, including a poem whose title he translated as 'Diese Nacht: nicht gutzumachen' (V, 95). Lütz states that the reader's reception of the image of the night is influenced by the changes that the concept of the night has undergone since Mandelstam's poem was first published, in his volume *Tristia* in 1922. He argues that these changes have been brought about by the horrors of the Nazi regime, so that the night image now also evokes 'die Reichspogromnacht und die unzähligen anderen Tod und Grauen bringenden Nächte'.⁵⁶ This connection is indeed convincing in the context of Mandelstam's poem, which itself sets the death of the speaker's mother against a background that is defined by Jewishness.⁵⁷ For if Celan is to reproduce this poem, then the circumstances of his own mother's death and the implications of his Jewish identity may infringe on the poem, intimating the Nazi

⁵⁵ Jürgen Lütz, "Der Schmerz schläft bei den Worten." Freigesetzte Worte, freigesetzte Zeit. Paul Celan als Übersetzer', in Alfred Bodenheimer and Shimon Sandbank (eds), *Poetik der Transformation: Paul Celan – Übersetzer und Übersetzt* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), pp. 21-54.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁷ The connection of Jewishness and the mother's death in Mandelstam's poem is evident, for example, in lines 7 and 8 of Celan's translation: 'Helles Judenhaus: sie setzen / meine Mutter bei' (V, 95).

persecution. In line with this expectation, Lütz argues that Celan transforms this serene, lullaby-like poem into a darker, more disjointed evocation of loss.⁵⁸

However, the status of the night image in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is different from that in Mandelstam's poem, since in Éluard's poem it is positively charged, evoking the love relationship. Celan's translation performs a similar transformation of the image of the night as in 'Diese Nacht: nicht gutzumachen', yet this transformation is more radical, since it shifts from an unambiguously celebratory image to one that also has negative connotations. For example, in line 13 of his version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', Celan translates the French noun 'des fous' as 'die Umnachteten' (line 13). On one level, this term does indicate that the figures are mentally unstable, and is therefore a literal translation of 'fous'. However, the past participle produces a sense of process, of the mind being overwhelmed by external pressures, which is absent from 'fous'. Moreover, the term brings the image of the night into the poem once again, where it is not present in the original. This phrase functions as an expression of solidarity, even identification, with these unfortunate figures, as Harbusch interprets it, but it also retroactively impacts on the image of the night in the poem's title and first line.⁵⁹ While the night represents a wholly positive impression in Éluard's poem, Celan's insertion of the term into this later section of the poem destabilises the original positivity. The night is no longer associated only with love, but is also transferred into the additional semantic field of madness. This transformation has two effects. On one level, the surrealist themes of the original poem are intensified, as the night comes to symbolise both love and madness, two states that are privileged in the surrealist aesthetic. Yet at the same time, the use of the night image

⁵⁸ Lütz, p. 31. See also Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 106: 'Mandel'stams Musikalität weicht einer Musikalität der Disharmonie mit Rissen, Zäsuren und härteren Fügungen. Celans Version wirkt in unruhiger Weise asketischer'.

⁵⁹ Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, pp. 158-59.

to depict madness posits the night as a negative force that can overwhelm individuals. The 'fous' (simply 'Irren' in Celan's draft of 1956) are thereby rendered as figures who have been overpowered by the past experience of the 'night'.

The surrealist overtones of the image of the night also surface in another poem written by Celan during the period in which he translated 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. In autumn 1957, Celan wrote a poem entitled 'Nacht' (I, 170) that begins with the phrase 'Kies und Geröll', aligning the image of the night with that of splinters of stone, and thereby implying fragmentation and dissolution.⁶⁰ However, as Hans-Michael Speier points out in his analysis of this poem, this fragmentation is not necessarily negative, since the poem seems also to suggest the loosening of the components of reality, so that they can be combined into new versions of reality, as implied by the term 'denkbar' at the beginning of the poem's third stanza.⁶¹ This reference to a possible future implied by the term 'denkbar' has surrealist undertones, and indeed Speier's reading of Celan's imagery in 'Nacht' is remarkably similar to Jean Raymond's analysis of Éluard's use of the image of the night in his poetry. Raymond asserts that Éluard's image of the night does not evoke darkness or shade, but is a vision 'd'obscurcissement, de vertige, de *dissolution*', all of which are positive in Éluard's surrealist aesthetic, since they suggest that conventional vision and perception may be destabilised and reconstituted as entirely new.⁶²

⁶⁰ A similar impression of destruction is also contained in the image of night in the poem 'Engführung' (also written in 1957): 'Asche. / Asche, Asche. / Nacht. / Nacht-und-Nacht. – Zum / Aug geh, zum feuchten' (I, 199). The night is intertwined with the image of destruction in the form of ash, and with the tears of loss in the image of damp eyes. The evocation of 'Kies' in the poem 'Nacht' also recalls the phrase 'den Kieselstein aus / der Mährischen Senke' from the *Niemandrose* poem 'Es ist alles anders' (1962-63; I, 284-86). Israel Chalfen identifies in these lines an allusion to Celan's grandmother, who is buried in the 'Mährische Senke' (a region of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in the Czech Republic), and to the Jewish custom of laying small stones on graves. Chalfen, *Paul Celan. Eine Biographie seiner Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1979), p. 30.

⁶¹ Hans-Michael Speier, 'Nacht', in Lehmann (ed.), *Sprachgitter*, pp. 259-67 (p. 260).

⁶² Jean, *La poétique du désir*, p. 381 (Jean's emphasis).

The idea that the night is the time when perceptions of reality may be dismantled in order to generate a more authentic vision, as identified by Speier in the poem 'Nacht', is also contained in 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. In the context of this translation, and of others written by Celan during the same period, Harbusch interprets the connection between 'die Nacht' and madness (such as the rendering of 'des fous' as 'die Umnachteten') as consonant with Celan's concept of the refusal to bow to the prevailing conditions. This connection is based on a series of utterances in Celan's radio essay on Mandelstam and in his *Meridian* speech. These points will be explored before Harbusch's line of argument is investigated.

The notion of absolute rejection of the prevailing conditions is articulated in Celan's discussion of the 'Gegenwort' in *Der Meridian*. An archaic synonym for 'die Antwort', Celan uses the term 'Gegenwort' in *Der Meridian* for its implication of contradiction. It designates the moment at which the individual does not respond to reality in a conventional way, and thus rejects that reality.⁶³ The two examples that Celan gives for this rejection of the *status quo* are Lucile's cry 'Es lebe der König', at the end of *Dantons Tod*, and the protagonist's desire, in Büchner's *Lenz* (1835), to be able to walk on his head. The former is an overt rejection of the *status quo* in three principal ways: it appears to be a monarchical acclamation in a Republic; it is a denial of Lucile's own convictions, since she has been a supporter of the Revolution; and it is an act against life itself since she knows that it constitutes a capital offence. Moreover, these words are contradictory in that they do not reflect Lucile's convictions, but rather Lucile is using them as tools to achieve her aim of following her husband into death.

⁶³ Cf. May's interpretation of Celan's poem 'Huhediblu' (I, 275), in which he states that the allusions to Franz Kafka's texts in that poem represent 'das Gegenwort, [...] welches sich der unmenschlichen Tyrannei und Barbarei der Geschichte entgegensetzt.' May, p. 254.

Celan describes the ‘Gegenwort’ as absurd, and yet he suggests that only such speech acts, which are performed by the individual alone and directed against the prevailing conditions, are human: ‘Gehuldigt wird hier der für die Gegenwart des Menschlichen zeugenden Majestät des Absurden’ (III, 190). With this phrase, Celan explains his understanding of Lucile’s cry ‘Es lebe der König!’, suggesting that she is not paying homage to the King but to absurdity, in the form of the rejection of the *status quo*. Indeed, this rejection is taken to the point of *de facto* suicide, since Lucile knows that her acclamation will cause her arrest and execution. Celan’s words suggest that such a commitment to absurdity is the only mark of true humanity. He thus seems to imply that individuals may only liberate themselves from the current conditions and thus be truly human if they do not attempt to replace those conditions with anything that has gone before. In Celan’s view, Lenz’s desire to walk on his head is a more extreme manifestation of this absurd stance, since it represents not only a rejection of current conditions, but also a complete reversal, in that the sky above becomes an abyss below. As Celan puts it, ‘Wer auf dem Kopf geht, meine Damen und Herren, – wer auf dem Kopf geht, der hat den Himmel als Abgrund unter sich’ (III, 195).⁶⁴ However, Celan’s representation of the ‘Gegenwort’ and of absurdity also allies them with madness, for at the point at which they are quoted both Lucile and Lenz, in Büchner’s texts, are descending into insanity. Thus it is implied that these figures, who according to Celan’s words in *Der Meridian* ought to be respected (as are ‘die Umnachteten’ in ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’), are nevertheless falling prey to *geistige Umnachtung*, such that their contradictory stance appears to be untenable for any length of time. Indeed, Büchner’s characters Lenz and Lucile both die soon after these instances of opposition.

⁶⁴ For a more detailed exploration of the status of the ‘Gegenwort’ in *Der Meridian*, as well as the relationship between Celan and the absurd (in the sense of Samuel Beckett’s oeuvre), see Lütz, pp. 40-43.

Celan's treatment of Büchner's texts appears to be absurd in itself, since he tends to read Büchner's works against the grain and so to develop new readings of *Dantons Tod* and *Lenz*. For example, rather than reading Lucile's final cry as evidence of her despair, such that she is compelled to seek her own death, Celan interprets this episode positively, as proof of Lucile's liberation from the *status quo* and so of her humanity. Indeed, in Celan's view, Lucile's and Lenz's responses are in no way an artificial reproduction of something that already exists, therefore not inhuman, but are entirely new, individual and consequently human. Their instances of 'Gegenwort' are manifestations of their own individual concerns independent of any aspect of the external world. By facing and rejecting the external conditions, such subjects have released themselves from the cycle of the constant reproduction of external reality and so are free. Through Celan's concept of the 'Gegenwort', the notions of laughter, absurdity and freedom from contingency are therefore represented as the hallmarks of humanity and individuality.

Harbusch contributes to this constellation of images and concepts by aligning the image of the night and the verb 'stocken' with this liberation.⁶⁵ She states that a connection between a rejection of contingency and the image of the night is evident in a phrase from Celan's translation of Charles Baudelaire's poem 'La Mort des pauvres': 'eh's Nacht wird, stockt es nicht' (IV, 821). Night is thus identified as the moment at which everything 'stockt', when the individual may be released from the hostile tumult of worldly events and relations. The verb 'stocken' is also used by Lucile at the end of *Dantons Tod*. In the penultimate scene of this play, Lucile expresses the perverse desire that, following the death of her husband Camille, everything else in the world should also stop moving. She uses the verb 'stocken' twice: 'Der Strom des Lebens müßte stocken, [...]. Ich will mich auf den Boden setzen und schreien, daß erschrocken Alles stehn bleibt, Alles stockt, sich

⁶⁵ Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, pp. 171-72.

nichts mehr regt.⁶⁶ Lucile's desire for such an unnatural interruption to the flow of life reflects the absurdity of post-Revolution Paris, where death appears to be more certain than life, as well as her utter devastation at the loss of her husband. Yet in *Der Meridian*, Celan turns her absurd cry into a positive utterance, since it reflects a liberating rejection of the *status quo*.

This interpretation of the image of the night, as when everything 'stockt' and therefore where the 'Gegenwort' is possible, informs an understanding of Celan's translation of Éluard's phrase 'je ris [...] de' as the isolated: 'ich lache'. At the end of his radio essay on Mandelstam, Celan makes an explicit connection between laughter and the poet's refusal to bow to the prevailing conditions: 'So kommt es zum Ausbruch aus der Kontingenz: durch das Lachen. Durch jenes, uns bekannte, "unsinnige" Lachen des Dichters – durch das Absurde' (M 221). This idea of an escape from contingency appears to be so fundamental to Celan's understanding of Mandelstam's aesthetics that it forms part of his essay's conclusion. The statement follows the citation of Mandelstam's poem 'Der erste Januar 1924', of which one of the final lines reads: 'Ein Lachen, selig, macht sich los – ' (V, 145). Towards the beginning of his essay, Celan states that Mandelstam often laughs at moments when an entirely different reaction is expected. The motif of laughter thus becomes synonymous with incongruity and with the rejection of, and attendant liberation from, the *status quo*. Such a liberation appears to be depicted in the phrase 'macht sich los' in Mandelstam's poem. Indeed, as Ivanović argues, Celan describes the laughter in Mandelstam's poem as 'unsinnig' because it turns history and reality on its head, and hence is labelled absurd.⁶⁷ 'Kontingenz' may thus be understood to refer to a dependence on the conditions of reality, which is precisely what Mandelstam rejects. It is therefore

⁶⁶ Büchner, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, I, 74.

⁶⁷ Ivanović, *Das Gedicht im Geheimnis der Begegnung*, p. 358.

linked to the 'Gegenwort' and to the representation of the night as the time for such absurdity. The evocation of the night in Celan's translation of Éluard's poem thus aligns itself with that of laughter, thereby creating a poetological allusion to the possibility of liberation through poetry.

The image of the night in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' therefore sets off a chain of associations that take the poem beyond its initial coordinates and combine with other images to create new meanings. Firstly, the night is designated as the realm where the individual is able to transgress the limits of conventional reality, as in surrealist theory and in Celan's poem 'Nacht'. As such, a connection may be drawn to Celan's concern with blindness and new vision in his versions of Éluard's poems from *Capitale de la douleur*, and in his prose text 'Edgar Jené', from the late 1940s. Secondly, Celan's version draws parallels between the night and madness, so intensifying the surrealist association of these two realms. And thirdly, the juxtaposition of laughter, the night and madness in Celan's version posits these states as expressions of humanity and individuality and therefore, in the context of Celan's poetics, of the liberation from the *status quo* that can be achieved through poetic speech. The image of the night in Celan's version thus compounds and complements its status in the original poem, as well as distilling some of Celan's key poetic theories.

Since the image of the night is a major surrealist symbol, Celan's emphasis of this term would seem to support the poem's surrealist qualities. However, it is notable that the first line of this poem appears to announce that the night is over, and consequently that it is daytime. Celan has therefore selected for translation a poem that begins by celebrating the end of night and emphasising the day. Indeed, this distancing from the night is underscored in Celan's version, in that he translates the French verb 'veiller' with the

German 'wachen'. While these are indeed cognate terms, the German verb also evokes awaking, so implicitly distancing the imagery from the realm of sleep. As such, the German version of the poem seems to be set at one remove from the traditional French surrealist celebration of sleep and dream. Celan explicitly rejected these qualities in a poetological note:

Bewußtsein: (zu Metaphern – Benveniste –)

ich möchte hier auf keinen Fall den onirischen Qualitäten des Gedichts das Wort reden; Gedichte sind zweifellos das Ergebnis von Vigilien; es gibt auch noch 'nüchterne Räusche'. (M 159/597)

Here, Celan makes explicit his view of the relationship between metaphor and consciousness. On the one hand, he distances his conception of poetic language from the Unconscious in the Freudian sense, by rejecting any relationship between poetry and dream. This approach to poetry reflects Celan's concern that the poem should engage with reality rather than being absolute, divorced from any concern with the external world. Nevertheless, the replacement of the oneiric qualities of the poem with 'vigils' does not represent a complete rejection of the presence of unconscious forces. Rather, the image of the vigil evokes Romantic fiction, in particular E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella *Der goldne Topf* (1814), a fantastical narrative that is divided into sections called 'Vigilien', night-watches during which the narrator tells the story. The story itself shifts between fantasy and reality, since the main character, Anselmus, is caught between the material world of bourgeois order and the immaterial realm of the imagination, and it is not always clear to the reader where one realm ends and the other begins.⁶⁸ Such a narratorial vigil is a liminal space, similar to dream, in that it constitutes a fantastical story told

⁶⁸ Jeanne Riou discusses this blurring of boundaries between the real and the imaginary in Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf* in her *Imagination in German Romanticism. Rethinking the Self and its Environment* (Bern: Lang, 2004), pp. 148-61.

during the night when others are sleeping. Celan's reference to vigils in his note on consciousness similarly appears to hover between the realms of the Conscious and Unconscious, and this impression of liminality is compounded by Celan's acknowledgement of the existence of 'sober ecstasies' ('nüchterne Räusche'). This phrase suggests a new category of *Rausch*, which is not entirely detached from consciousness and which is nevertheless still a form of ecstatic transport.

The nature of this apparent blending of conscious and unconscious activity may be explained as Celan's response to the theory of Émile Benveniste (1902-76), whose name appears in parentheses at the beginning of this poetological note. Celan takes up Benveniste's notion that there are similarities between linguistic discourse and the Unconscious, as the latter is described by Freud in *Die Traumdeutung*. According to Benveniste, this correspondence rests on the notion that both discourse and the Unconscious use a rhetorical mode with its own 'figures' particular to it; both employ a series of tropes; and both have a metaphorical basis.⁶⁹ So it is possible to identify dreamlike characteristics in linguistic expression without necessarily inferring that they are a product of the Unconscious in Freudian terms. In this context, Celan's translation of Éluard's poem, in which the image of the vigil is prominent, evokes this revised view of the relationship between language and the Unconscious, which posits a non-Freudian linguistic Unconscious.

⁶⁹ Benveniste, 'Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la découverte freudienne', *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1966-74), I (1966), 75-87. Benveniste was a French linguist concerned, *inter alia*, with the issue of the I/You polarity, contending that the 'I' is the person uttering the discourse containing 'I' at the present instance; while 'you', similarly, is the individual who is spoken to in the present instance of the discourse containing the word 'you'. Such an inherent connection between the meaning and the moment of utterance parallels the contingency expressed by deictic terms in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' and in his poeticological writings, discussed later in this chapter. Cf. Renate Böschstein-Schäfer, 'Traum und Sprache in der Dichtung Paul Celans', pp. 223-36 (pp. 229-30).

In Celan's German version of Jean Cayrol's commentary for Alain Resnais's film *Nacht und Nebel* (1954 for the original and the translation), the verb 'wachen' is used to refer to the necessity of keeping watch in order to warn others of impending danger: 'Wer von uns wacht hier und warnt uns, wenn die neuen Henker kommen?' (IV, 97). In this question, the act of keeping watch is implicitly interlinked with an awareness of the past, for it would be possible to detect the new 'Henker' only if the nature of the former executioners is known. This conception of keeping watch as a simultaneous awareness of present and past reality, and of the interaction between the two, recalls the idea in 'Edgar Jené' that the speaker remains in communication with the dark sources of the past ('Zwiesprache mit den finstern Quellen'). Since that communication is also represented as an awareness of the interaction between the Conscious and the Unconscious, the act of keeping watch is again situated in a liminal space between these two realms and between the past and the present. So in the context of 'Nacht und Nebel', itself evoked by the primacy of the term 'Nacht' in 'Nous avons fait la nuit', the speaker's assertion that he is keeping watch suggests this communication between the conscious and unconscious realms. Further, it locates the speaker at the nexus of the past and present, in constant awareness of the impact of that past on the present, and so fulfils the imperative articulated in one of his poetological notes: 'Einer: dieser Eine kann jeder von uns sein. "Einer muß dasein", schreibt Kafka, "einer muß wachen"'. (M 91/146).⁷⁰

(iv) Double figures

The doubling that infuses 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is reflected in the fifth line of Celan's translation, in which the images of the star and the stone are juxtaposed. The phrase 'Stern in den Stein' is isolated between a line break and a colon, and the parallelism of these terms is emphasised through alliteration. In his discussion of *Die Niemandrose*,

⁷⁰ Celan quotes from the end of Kafka's short story 'Nachts': 'Einer muß wachen, heißt es. Einer muß da sein', in Kafka's *Gesammelte Werke*, p. 88.

Lehmann highlights the juxtaposition of the images of the star and the stone as a classic example of Celan's fusion of opposites in that volume. These images represent the fusion of above and below; air and earth; and lightness and heaviness that suffuse many of the *Niemandrose* poems.⁷¹ The phrase 'Stern in den Stein' of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' thus figures as an anticipation of this juxtaposition, and as an early example of Celan's concern with such constellations.⁷²

In Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit', the star is located in the realm of the stone, which, as has been established, represents the dark past of reality ('Schwarzerde') as well as the memorialisation of death ('Grabstein'). The star thus evokes the love relationship, as in Éluard's original poem, yet simultaneously takes on the sinister connotations of suffering and death. This shift from the connotations of the original French poem to the post-Holocaust implications of the translation reflects the change that language has undergone as a result of the recent past. The star image has also taken on the connotation of persecution as a result of the Nazis' use of the Star of David during the Holocaust.⁷³ The layering of meaning of the star image thus reflects the layering of time represented by the image of stone. As a new meaning arises, it does not erase the previous one, but rather supplements it. Any image is thereby constituted by a host of simultaneously valid meanings.

⁷¹ Lehmann, *Die Niemandrose*, pp. 30-31.

⁷² Mackey and James K. Lyon discuss the blurred distinctions between the stone and star imagery in *Die Niemandrose*. See Mackey, p. 297 and Lyon, 'The language of stone', p. 305. The apparent interchangeability of the stone and the star in Celan's poetics is made evident in a draft version of Celan's poem 'Blume'. Here, the first line evokes a star ('Ich bin blind wie mein Stern'), which is replaced by a stone in the final version: 'Der Stein. / Der Stein in der Luft, dem ich folgte. / Dein Aug, so blind wie der Stein.' Paul Celan, *Sprachgitter. Vorstufen – Textgenese – Endfassung*, ed. by Heino Schmull (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), pp. 32-35.

⁷³ Celan himself perceived a connection between the image of the star in his poetry and his Jewishness, as suggested by the note written above the first draft of his poem 'Ein Stern' (III, 91), dated 17 September 1969: 'Mon judaïsme: ce que je / reconnais encore dans / les débris de mon existence.' Cited in Paul Celan – Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondence (1951-1970). Avec un choix de lettres de Paul Celan à son fils Eric*, ed. by Bertrand Badiou, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), II, 590.

In the seventh line of Celan's version, Éluard's confident assertion of future fertility, 'germera', is rendered with two verbs: 'keimen' and 'aufgehen'. The addition of the verb 'aufgehen' may be read as an anticipation of the aesthetics of *Die Niemandrose*, in which the blossoming flower (the rose in the volume's title) is analogous to the development of poetic language.⁷⁴ In this respect, Celan's addition of the term 'hier' before this phrase, and the isolation of this phrase between a dash and a full stop, suggests that the phrase can be read as referring both to the beloved's body (as in Éluard's poem) and to the poetic text itself: '– hier / soll es keimen und aufgehen'. This moment in the translation thus illustrates the way in which the new German version functions on both figurative and poetological levels: the germination refers simultaneously to the erotic dimension of the depicted love relationship and to the unfolding of poetic creation. Indeed, Olschner's description of the effect of Celan's translations itself uses the verb 'aufgehen', stating that: 'seine Übertragungen [sich] von diesen Vorlagen lösen und in die eigene Dichtung eingehen und in ihr aufgehen.'⁷⁵ The phrase 'hier / soll es keimen und aufgehen' may consequently be read as a description of the translation process itself, where 'hier' is Celan's writing and 'es' denotes the original poem.

The image of blossoming ('aufgehen') is also closely related to that of the star, particularly in the volume *Die Niemandrose*. The star can represent, *inter alia*, an opening-out and a liberation, since it evokes the expanse of the night sky. Yet at the same time, and as is particularly apparent in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', the star is related to suffering and death, in the context of the Star of David and the grave stone. Such a juxtaposition can be read into lines 5 to 7 of 'Nous avons fait la nuit':

⁷⁴ See Lehmann (*Die Niemandrose*, p. 34) for a discussion of the relationship between the image of a blossoming rose and the poetics of *Die Niemandrose*.

⁷⁵ Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 53.

Stern in den Stein: deines Körpers
Gütigsein – hier
soll es keimen und aufgehn.

The blossoming occurs in the stone, thus representing precisely the encounter of poetic creation and suffering that suffuses *Die Niemandrose*. Yet the intimations of hope and future potential evoked by the juxtaposition of the star, of the goodness of the addressee's body, and of its blossoming simultaneously indicate a promise of triumph over the Nazi past and over the Holocaust connotations of terms such as 'Stern'. At this point, the poem thus points the reader in two directions, both back at the violation of language as a result of the Holocaust, and forward to the potential for a triumph over these demons of the past through the poetic re-inscription of Jewish identity.

(v) Die Unbekannt-Fremde

The encounter between the speaker and the addressee in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' comes to a climax with the phrase 'du wirst mir / zur Unbekannt-Fremden'. The colon that precedes this phrase suggests that this statement is the result of the act of synchronisation described in the previous lines. Moreover, the elision of the terms 'unbekannt' and 'fremd' take on specific connotations in the context of Celan's poetics. In one of his poetological notes, Celan connects three elements: the poem's rhythm, the image of an 'Unbekanntes' and the addressee.

Rhythmus im Gedicht: das sind **unwiederholbare, schicksalshafte Sinnbewegungen** auf ein Unbekanntes zu, das sich ~~vielleicht manchmal zu~~ zuweilen als Du denken läßt: 'am Lichtsinn errätst du die Seele'. – Sie sind, **auch da, wo sie am stimmlosesten sind, sprachbedingt.** (M 119/344)⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The quotation 'am Lichtsinn errätst du die Seele' is from Celan's poem 'Sprachgitter' (I, 167).

This fragment functions as an intertext for 'Nous avons fait la nuit' on at least three levels. Firstly, the concept of the poem as constituted of unrepeatable 'Sinnbewegungen' supports the translation's expression of the poem as a series of unique moments: 'du bist / anders von Mal zu Mal'. Secondly, the temporary nature of each moment is expressed in the term 'zuweilen'. And thirdly, the idea in the above quotation that the poem is moving towards an unknown figure, which can be considered a 'Du', is mirrored in the progression of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', towards the realisation of the addressee as 'die Unbekannte'. Indeed, the speaker in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' describes the moment at which the addressee is simultaneously unknown and familiar ('du wirst mir / zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir'), so mirroring the oscillation expressed in Celan's note. Moreover, the fourfold, stuttering repetition of 'du' in these lines of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' ('du wirst mir / [...], du gleichst dir, du gleichst / allem Geliebten, du bist') reflects both aurally and visually the notion that the poem addresses a series of as-yet unknown figures, which are intermittently ('zuweilen') named 'du'. As such, the final lines of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' demonstrate this element of Celan's poetological theory.

In addition, in the *Meridian* speech itself Celan's conceptualisation of the poem's 'du' is aligned with that of 'das Andere', and the latter term is elided with 'das Fremde'.⁷⁷ This apparent alignment of the 'unknown' with the poem's addressee, and of the addressee with 'das Fremde', is articulated in the phrase 'du wirst mir / zur Unbekannt-Fremden'. This point in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' thereby represents the crystallisation of these ideas into one compound form, just as Celan seems to suggest in *Der Meridian*.

⁷⁷ Two other quotations, the first from the *Meridian* speech itself and the second an unfinished sentence from Celan's preparatory notes, suggest this association of the 'Du' and 'das Andere': 'Erst im Raum dieses Gesprächs konstituiert sich das Angesprochene, versammelt es sich um das es ansprechende und nennende Ich. Aber in diese Gegenwart bringt das Angesprochene und durch Nennung gleichsam zum Du Gewordene auch sein Anderssein mit' (III 198); and 'Erst wenn du das Andere und Fremde als das Dir Eigenste und Deine erkannt hast...' (M 128/401).

The final lines of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' amplify this alignment of the addressee with 'the other', or the external world. In Éluard's phrase, 'semblable à tout ce que j'aime', the reference is limited to the speaker's subjectivity ('j'aime'). Celan's version, 'du gleichst allem Geliebten', removes any mention of the speaker and thereby shifts the reference to a wider, more impersonal sphere. Moreover, the positioning of the term 'allem' at the beginning of a line emphasises it as the crux of the phrase. Éluard's concept of resemblance and interchangeability is thus accepted by Celan, but expanded into a universal and impersonal phenomenon. Indeed, such an expansion is implied in a further poetological note by Celan: 'im Singulären spricht das Gemeinsame' (M 117/331). And in *Der Meridian*, Celan characterises the poem as a dialogue between the speaker and 'das Erscheinende' (the outside world), and states that, through this dialogue, the addressee is named as 'Du'.⁷⁸ Therefore, Celan's phrase in this translation, 'Du gleichst allem Geliebten', anticipates this alignment of the addressee with the outside world.

These examples of points of intersection between Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' and his poetic theories suggests not simply similarity but also interaction. If 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is read in the light of Celan's poetological writings and notes, it can be interpreted as both an illustration of Celan's concept of linguistic change. Yet the poem does not merely illustrate such semantic shifts but also thematises the permanent difference that results from the fact that language is in a constantly evolving relationship to reality. The poetological issues that Celan discusses through complex and often opaque formulations in his poetological writings are inscribed in the text's lexical and syntactic structures. As such, the relationship between Celan's poetics and translations is

⁷⁸ 'Das Gedicht wird – unter welchen Bedingungen! – zum Gedicht eines – immer noch-Wahrnehmenden, dem Erscheinenden Zugewandten, dieses Erscheinende Befragenden und Ansprechenden; es wird Gespräch – oft ist es verzweifelteres Gespräch. // Erst im Raum dieses Gesprächs konstituiert sich das Angesprochene, versammelt es sich um das es ansprechende und nennende Ich. Aber in diese Gegenwart bringt das Angesprochene und durch Nennung gleichsam zum Du Gewordene auch sein Anderssein mit' (III, 198).

not one of straightforward analogy or illustration, for the translation performs what the poetics can only describe.

(b) 1956-1957: Recontextualising the love relationship

The intensified celebration of the love relationship in Celan's versions of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' may be interpreted in part as a result of the biographical detail that Celan, then married to Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, had recently recommenced his relationship with the Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann.⁷⁹ Celan sent a handwritten version of the completed translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' to Bachmann in February 1958, a detail that implies a potential connection between the poem's addressee and his lover.⁸⁰ Florence Pennone thereby concludes that the addressee of Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is Bachmann.⁸¹ In her analysis of this translation, Harbusch also briefly notes that Celan sent the poem to Bachmann, but uses it to support her thesis that the poem's sole addressee is Celan-Lestrange. She attributes the sense of doubt that she identifies in the portrayal of the *Ich/Du* relationship in 'Nous avons fait la nuit', as well as in other translations and poems from this period, to the marital crisis through which Celan and Celan-Lestrange were going at the time.⁸² However, I argue that the development of the translation between 1956, before the relationship with Bachmann began, and late 1957, suggests that both Celan-Lestrange and Bachmann may be considered to be among the poem's addressees, and that this tension between a series of potential addressees has poetological implications.

⁷⁹ It is thought that Celan and Bachmann became lovers while Celan was living in Vienna in early 1948. The renewal of their relationship, in October 1957, first became public knowledge with the publication of the correspondence between Celan and Celan-Lestrange in 2001.

⁸⁰ DLA: Konvolut Bachmann, D 90.1.2814.

⁸¹ Pennone, p. 473.

⁸² See Harbusch, *Gegenübersetzungen*, pp. 127-28 and p. 155. Harbusch (p. 129) states in a footnote that Celan sent a handwritten version of this poem to Bachmann, but does not conclude that she may therefore also be an addressee of the poem itself.

These biographical coordinates may be reflected in the apparent change in tone in the portrayal of the love relationship between 1956 and 1957. The first draft seems to depict a straightforward optimistic view of the relationship, in line with Éluard's poem. Yet by 1957 this simplicity has been replaced by distortion and ambiguity, as the poem oscillates between the intensification of the love relationship and the insertion of apparently negative connotations. As Harbusch notes, the insertion of the term 'Fremde' in line 19 of Celan's translation may function as an allusion to Celan-Lestranger, as the German rendering of her maiden name, 'Lestranger'. Harbusch therefore concludes that Celan transforms Éluard's love poem into a poem about his love for his wife, which she implies may have been motivated by the couple's fifth wedding anniversary on 23 December, the day before Celan began to redraft his translation.⁸³ However, Harbusch overlooks the fact that Celan also apparently uses the adjective 'fremd' to refer to Bachmann. For example, his poem 'In Ägypten' (1948; I, 46), composed shortly after Celan left Vienna, and therefore soon after the end of his first relationship with Bachmann, repeatedly evokes a figure referred to as 'die Fremde', who has been identified with Bachmann.⁸⁴ Moreover, the term 'Fremde' does not feature in Celan's translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' in 1956, when the biographical facts suggest that the beloved of Celan's translation was more likely to have been Celan-Lestranger. Therefore, by adding the term 'Fremde' in 1957, Celan seems to evoke both Bachmann and Celan-Lestranger simultaneously.

This biographical reading has two poetological connotations that are entirely consonant with the foregoing poetological analysis of Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. Firstly, the

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 127-28.

⁸⁴ Cf. Wolfgang Emmerich, *Paul Celan* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1999), pp. 77. Harbusch (*Gegenübersetzungen*, pp. 127-28) cites Emmerich's connection of Celan-Lestranger with the term 'das Fremde' in support of her interpretation, but does not mention Emmerich's similar linking of this term with Bachmann. See Emmerich, p. 89.

poem's double addressee reflects the poetological concepts of duality and encounter that define the poem. Secondly, the change in tone between Éluard's poem and Celan's version (and indeed between the 1956 and 1957 versions of the translation) posits the German poem as a recontextualisation of Éluard's poem in Celan's time, in that it reflects both Celan's poetological and personal coordinates. As such, the translation functions as an illustration of this concept of recontextualisation, and of the contingent relationship between poetry and time.

This conjunction of biography and poetics highlights the potential poetological content of a biographical interpretation, in the context of Celan's oeuvre, and so suggests that biographical readings should not be rejected out of hand as necessarily reductive. On the contrary, if Celan's poetic practice is viewed as a recontextualisation of received impulses, such that the poem's meaning changes according to its particular relationship to other texts, events or times, then the poem's relationship to its biographical coordinates must also be taken into account. The question of the significance of Celan's biography for the interpretation of his poems has become an increasingly prominent strand of criticism on Celan's oeuvre as new details about his life have emerged. Positions range from Israel Chalfen's contention that knowledge of the poet's biographical background is necessary if readers are to understand the poems fully, through to Winfried Menninghaus's assertion that the 'Finderglück' of those who seek out the potential referents and influences of Celan's poems hinders more sophisticated critical inquiry.⁸⁵ Menninghaus's concern is appropriate for any reading that would seek to go no further than to identify the poem's particular biographical context, but my reading of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' in

⁸⁵ Chalfen, *Paul Celan*, p. 7; and Menninghaus, 'Wissen oder Nicht-Wissen. Überlegungen zum Problem des Zitats bei Celan und in der Celan-Philologie', in Hamacher and Menninghaus, pp. 170-90 (p. 170). Bollack has summarised many of the arguments in this debate – albeit with a view to supporting his own position, that the knowledge of biographical facts are essential for a full interpretation – in his *L'Écrit. Une poétique dans l'œuvre de Paul Celan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 21-24.

the light of Celan's biographical coordinates has shown that knowledge of such facts can enrich and elucidate an interpretation of the poem's poetological meaning. Fruitful new interpretations may emerge from a study of how the context is transformed when it is integrated into the poem.

4 Conclusion: Permanent Difference

Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is not only a recontextualisation in terms of his biographical coordinates. The new meanings that certain German terms and phrases in his version have taken on, as a result of semantic shifts both within the post-Holocaust German language and as a result of Celan's poetological terminology, lend the poem a multivalency that the original does not possess. The new German version is simultaneously a love poem, a monument to a violated language and a poetological poem. It is the dialectical charge between the French and German language and between Éluard's and Celan's different times that generates this new version, rich in alternative meanings.

Moreover, this recontextualisation is thematised and celebrated within the poem itself, for the fact that an entirely new poem may be generated in this way reflects the sense of flux expressed in the final phrase of Celan's version: 'du bist / anders von Mal zu Mal'. The shift in the final stages of the poem from Éluard's celebration of novelty to an assertion of permanent difference implies that absolute novelty is impossible, in part as a result of the intrusion of the past into contemporary language, so that instead this tension between the present and the past means that the poem is different at each moment. This sustained conflict between similarity and difference illustrated by and expressed in the German poem articulates the tension that Celan's theoretical writings posit as being at the core of poetic writing. In other words, the relationship between the original poem

and the new version renders explicit 'dieses Spannungsverhältnis der Zeiten, der eigenen und der fremden', to which Celan refers in his radio essay on Mandelstam's poetry (M 216). Celan makes a similar reference to a tension between two realms in *Der Meridian*, in his discussion of the relationship between the poem's past ('Schon-nicht-mehr') and present ('Immer-noch'): '[das Gedicht] ruft und holt sich, um bestehen zu können, unausgesetzt aus seinem Schon-nicht-mehr in sein Immer-noch zurück' (III, 197). It is precisely this permanent ('unausgesetzt') oscillation between the past and present that is illustrated by Celan's translation of Éluard's poem, and that is thematised by its assertion of permanent difference.⁸⁶

This celebration of the tension between the poem's present and past, or between its own concerns and other concerns, is reflected in Celan's reference to the poem's 'Hier und Jetzt' in *Der Meridian*.. Therefore, through the insertion of the terms 'hier' and 'jetzt' into the version of Éluard's poem, the new German poem marks itself as the unique presence (the 'einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart') of the original French poem. However, this assertion of uniqueness does not suggest that the process of the original poem's recontextualisation stops there. Rather, the deictic nature of the terms 'hier' and 'jetzt' renders them expressions of permanent flux. A deictic term simultaneously connotes reference and lack of reference, in that it suggests a specific moment, and yet loses that reference as soon as it is uttered a second time, especially if it is uttered by another person.⁸⁷ The terms 'hier' and 'jetzt' therefore change their meaning according to the

⁸⁶ Two phrases from Celan's *Meridian* speech further suggest a preoccupation with this notion of poetry as a series of continual, incessant or repeated acts: '[Das Gedicht] hält *unentwegt* auf jenes "Andere" zu'; and 'Das einmal, das *immer wieder* einmal und nur jetzt und nur hier Wahrgenommene und Wahrzunehmende' (III, 197-9) (my emphasis).

⁸⁷ In his study of what he terms 'modern' French poetry (his examples are Charles Baudelaire, Paul Valéry and Éluard), Karl Alfred Blüher argues that the frequent use of the definite article in surrealist poems represents a revitalisation of the deictic function of subjective poetry. These terms situate the poem, suggesting that something concrete is being communicated. Yet Blüher also shows that in modern poetry these impressions of specific and personal communication are held in tension with a

time and place in which they are uttered. The deictic term may thus be considered to be the marker *par excellence* of permanent difference.

In a poetological note that resembles Celan's comment on the 'Hier und Jetzt', he wrote:

Das Wissen des ~~Dichters~~ **Gedichts** ist ein – tiefenpsychologisch wohl kaum zu
zu erlotendes – Mitwissen **mit einem andern**; es gibt **unsichtbar**
kommunizierende Gefäße. – (M 143/497)

The 'Mitsprechen' of the *Meridian* quotation is rendered as 'Mitwissen' in this note, but both extracts share the essential idea that the poem is constituted of the communication between two otherwise distinct realms. My analysis of Celan's version of Éluard's poem 'Nous avons fait la nuit' has shown that in the process of translation this invisible communication between two realms is rendered briefly perceptible. As Celan's note suggests, the surrealist image of the communicating vessel helps to visualise and conceptualise this duality; and Celan's dismissal of 'Tiefenpsychologie' implies that such a concept of communication between two realms need not have recourse to Freudian psychoanalysis. As such, this note parallels Celan's implicit rejection of Freud's theories in 'Edgar Jené'.

The ongoing tension within the new poem between the two disparate realms, which means that the German version refers to the original poem and yet at the same time is a different work altogether, renders the translation simultaneously the same as and different from the original. This tension between simultaneous identity and difference

destruction of communication. My reading of the deictic term as both referential and non-referential thereby concurs with Blüher's description of the paradoxical nature of modern poetic communication. See Blüher, 'Das "lyrische Du" in der Dichtung der Moderne: Modellanalysen zu Baudelaire, Apollinaire und Éluard', in Warning and Wehle, pp. 113-43 (p. 114 and p. 120).

has already been noted in the previous chapter, in respect of Celan's poem 'Das letzte Gedicht', but it perhaps made most explicit in 'Nous avons fait la nuit', in Celan's sentence: 'Leise / stimme ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimme sie / in eins mit der Nacht'. Here, the phrase 'in eins' represents the essential duality that structures the poem, emphasising the simultaneity of the encounter that is depicted in the poem. The following chapter demonstrates that this tension between identity and difference and the concomitant impression of permanent difference, as expressed by the phrase 'in eins', informs several of Celan's other poems, when read in the light of his version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit'.

Chapter 8

‘In Eins’: Shared Poetic Space

The foregoing analysis of Celan’s poem ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ established the poetological character of this version of Paul Éluard’s poem. The poem evokes the duality seemingly inherent in the poetic process, in Celan’s view, and consequently both illustrates and thematises the concept of permanent difference. In addition, it suggests that this duality may be understood as the ongoing communication between two disparate realms, a notion that has also been highlighted through studies of Celan’s reception of surrealist works by Edgar Jené, Aimé Césaire, André Breton and Robert Desnos. Moreover, one of Celan’s poetological notes suggested that he associated these concepts of duality and communication with the metaphor of the communicating vessels. In this chapter I demonstrate that this particular interpretation of Celan’s poetics may inform readings of his other writings. As such, the discussion moves beyond Celan’s direct encounters with surrealist works to consider how the poetological insights gained in the studies of these direct encounters have implications above and beyond an evaluation of Celan’s reception of surrealism.

In Celan’s version of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ the phrase ‘in eins’ is central to the convergence of disparate elements and the resulting permanent difference that the poem thematises. The phrase ‘in eins’ appears in three other works by Celan, and the following analyses of these other poems demonstrate both the pivotal significance of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ within Celan’s oeuvre and how an interpretation of that poem elucidates Celan’s poetry and poetics. The three poems in which the phrase ‘in eins’ appears are: ‘Die Halde’ (1954; I, 118), ‘In Eins’ (1962; I, 270), and Celan’s translation of

Shakespeare's Sonnet 105 (1963; V, 344-45).¹ I argue that the uses of the phrase 'in eins' in these poems and in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' combine to suggest a tension between identity and difference, in that a text can be simultaneously the same as and different from its counterpart. The second part of this chapter explores Celan's metaphorical descriptions of this tension, showing that he uses in particular the images of a meridian and of communicating vessels to conceptualise the relationship between texts. By analysing these metaphors and their functions within Celan's poetics, I show that Celan's use of the image of communicating vessels posits a theory of a textual Unconscious that is similar to that propagated by the surrealists, and yet distinct from the Freudian conception of the Unconscious. Crucially, Celan's own comments on this apparent textual Unconscious imply that these hidden layers may be recognised through the process of translation, so privileging translation as a point not only of encounter but also of new and unique insight.

1 'Die Halde'

The first published poem in which Celan uses the phrase 'in eins' is 'Die Halde', written in 1954:

DIE HALDE

Neben mir lebst du, gleich mir:
als ein Stein
in der eingesunkenen Wange der Nacht.

O diese Halde, Geliebte,
wo wir pausenlos rollen,
wir Steine,

¹ For the purposes of this discussion, I shall refer to Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit', 'Die Halde', 'In Eins' and his translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105 as the 'in eins' poems.

von Rinnsal zu Rinnsal.
Runder von Mal zu Mal.
Ähnlicher. Fremder.

O dieses trunkene Aug,
das hier umherirrt wie wir
und uns zuweilen
staunend in eins schaut.

The lexical similarities between ‘Die Halde’ and Celan’s version of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ are striking in such phrases as ‘von Mal zu Mal’ and ‘in eins’, and have been noted by Leonard Olschner.² Less apparent parallels are the images of stones, rivulets (‘Rinnsal’) and the marvellous (‘staunend’), and an examination of these points of contact results in new readings of each of the poems.

The image of the rivulets along which the stones are rolling suggests memorialisation, since these grooves mark the passage of water or stones and thereby act as present markers of past occurrences. This association is intensified in the context of Celan’s oeuvre, for example in the evocation of grooves in Celan’s poem ‘Engführung’ (1957-58; I, 147), in the phrase: ‘sichtbar, aufs / neue: die Rillen’. Peter Szondi interprets this image as representing the memories of an earlier era, which have become visible ‘in Form von *Rillen*, für immer in das Gedächtnis der Menschheit eingegraben.’³ Celan’s version of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ uses similar symbolism, since it depicts a furrow being dug into stone, an image that is also related to the concept of memorialisation through its embedding in the ‘Grab [...] Stein’ image. As discussed in the previous chapter, the noun ‘Mal’ in ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ also evokes a memorial, and indeed the rivulets in ‘Die

² Leonard Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 145.

³ Peter Szondi, ‘Durch die Enge geführt’, p. 383.

Halde' are associated with the phrase 'von Mal zu Mal' in that same poem through the syntactic parallel and rhyme: 'von Rinnsal zu Rinnsal. / [...] von Mal zu Mal.' The poems 'Die Halde' and 'Engführung' thus intersect with 'Nous avons fait la nuit' to bind the image of the groove or rivulet ('Rinnsal' – 'Rille' – 'Gefurch') to the theme of memorialisation.

The significance of the term 'staunend' for the conjunction of 'Die Halde' and 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is only evident in the 1956 version of the latter poem, in the line 'Bestaun ich, ein Verzücker, die Unbekannte, zu der du nun wirst.' This comparison highlights the surrealist undertones of 'Die Halde', by evoking the marvellous union of the lovers. Indeed, Klaus Voswinckel has identified what he calls a 'surreal' allusion to Eros at this point:

Das im dritten Abschnitt berufene Auge, das trunken 'umherirrt' und die beiden zuweilen 'staunend in eins schaut', könnte man als surreale Eroserscheinung verstehen, die der Poesie zumindest verwandt ist. Denn auch die Leistung des Gedichts ist es ja, daß sie beide 'in eins' sieht, mitsamt ihrer Fremdheit, die in der Sprache des Gedichts zum Ausdruck kommt.⁴

Voswinckel's reading of this tension within the poem interprets the poem's figures as lovers, who are brought together, despite their difference, by Eros's gaze. Such a notion is indeed surrealist (rather than 'surreal', as Voswinckel puts it), since it reflects the surrealist focus on erotic desire as the force that may unite disparate elements. However, as Voswinckel notes, the different figures are not completely united in 'Die Halde', but are brought together 'mitsamt ihrer Fremdheit'. So a sustained tension between similarity and difference is evoked in the poem.

⁴ Klaus Voswinckel, p. 136.

In 'Die Halde', this tension is represented by the fact that the increasing identity of the two stones ('Runder von Mal zu Mal') is immediately contradicted: 'Ähnlicher. Fremder.' The parallelism of this line does not allow for one of the terms to suppress the other. Although the couple is unified ('in eins') by the gaze of an other, the tension is not overcome.⁵ Rather, the temporary nature of this supposed union is expressed twice in the poem, in the phrases 'von Mal zu Mal' and 'zuweilen'. The resulting impression that the union cannot be lasting, but must be constantly reproduced, belies the notion of permanent unification. The suggestion is rather that the unity indicated by the phrase 'in eins' repeatedly falls apart, so that the figures oscillate between identity and difference. Such an apparent paradox, whereby the stones are simultaneously more similar and more strange, reflects the physicality of the stones themselves. They indeed become rounder, more polished and more alike as they roll, but the closer to perfect spheres they become, the less their surfaces may remain in contact with one another. Such a tension between similarity and difference has also been identified in 'Nous avons fait la nuit', in the repeated difference expressed by the final phrase, 'anders von Mal zu Mal'; although in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' that tension is more radical, since similarity ('ähnlich') is replaced by identity ('gleich'). The lexical similarities between 'Die Halde' and 'Nous avons fait la nuit' are thus not just incidental parallels, but serve to highlight the conceptual connections between the two poems. On this account, the images of permanent difference in each poem combine to thematise one aspect of the process of translation: that a poem in translation is both the same as and repeatedly different from the original.

⁵ A draft version of 'Die Halde' shows that line 9 originally read: 'ähnlicher, Fremder' (DLA: AA 1.2,5). The comma followed by the capitalisation of 'Fremder' makes that term a noun, evoking the image of a stranger. As such, the line need not be read as an irresolvable paradox, but can also suggest that strangers are becoming more familiar. Indeed, the fact that Celan apparently used the feminine noun 'Fremde' to allude to both Gisèle Celan-Lestrange and Ingeborg Bachmann also suggests a possible biographical reference. This line is erroneously printed as 'Ähnlicher. Fremder.' in Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle. Vorstufen, Textgenese, Endfassung*, ed. by Schmuß (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), p. 76.

Bernhard Fassbind's interpretation of 'Die Halde' also contributes to an understanding of how the poem may be read as such a comment on translation.⁶ Fassbind perceives the conflict between identity and difference in this poem, such as in line 9, as a self-reflexive thematisation of the process of metaphor. For a metaphor is the site of a conflict between identity and difference, in that it calls for the recognition of the identity and difference between the two elements of which it is constituted.⁷ If 'Die Halde' is understood to thematise metaphor in this way, then it can also be read as a comment on translation – for both of these processes involve transfer from one realm to another (and consequently are both called 'Übertragung' in German) – and on the attendant tension between identity and difference. The duality that is essential to both of these rhetorical figures means that 'Die Halde' can indeed be read, particularly in the light of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', *inter alia* as a thematisation of the translation process.

2 Sonnet 105

'Die Halde' thus resonates with Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', pre-figuring some of the images and ideas that emerge from the translation of Éluard's poem. Echoes of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' are also found in poems written after that translation. In the 1960s, Celan translated and published several of Shakespeare's sonnets. These translations were gathered together in a single volume in 1967.⁸ One of these translations, that of Sonnet 105 (V, 344-45), which Celan translated in 1963, recalls Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit':

⁶ Bernhard Fassbind, *Poetik des Dialogs: Voraussetzungen dialogischer Poesie bei Paul Celan und Konzepte von Intersubjektivität bei Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger und Emmanuel Levinas* (Munich: Fink, 1995), p. 132.

⁷ Fassbind cites Paul Ricoeur's description of metaphor as the manifestation of a conflict of identity and difference (1975), in Ricoeur's *Die lebendige Metapher. Aus dem Französischen von Rainer Rochlitz* (Munich: Fink, 1986).

⁸ William Shakespeare, *Einundzwanzig Sonette. Deutsch von Paul Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1967). Celan translated all these poems between 1960 and 1966. The manuscript of his translation of Sonnet 105 is dated 1 November 1963. Cf. Rolf Bücher, 'William Shakespeare: Einundzwanzig Sonette I', in Gellhaus (ed.), *Fremde Nähe*, pp. 417-39 (p. 426).

Let not my love be call'd idolatry,
Nor my belovèd as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.

Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse to constancy confin'd,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.

“Fair, kind, and true” is all my argument –
“Fair, kind, and true” varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent –
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.

“Fair, kind, and true” have often liv'd alone,
Which three till now never kept seat in one.

Ihr sollt, den ich da lieb, nicht Abgott heißen,
nicht Götzendienst, was ich da treib und trieb.
All dieses Singen hier, all dieses Preisen:
von ihm, an ihn und immer ihm zulieb.

Gut ist mein Freund, ists heute und ists morgen,
und keiner ist beständiger als er.
In der Beständigkeit, da bleibt mein Vers geborgen,
spricht von dem Einen, schweift mir nicht umher.

“Schön, gut und treu”, das singe ich und singe.
“Schön, gut und treu” – stets anders und stets das.
Ich find, erfind – um sie in eins zu bringen,
sie einzubringen ohne Unterlaß.

“Schön, gut und treu” so oft getrennt, geschieden.

In Einem will ich drei zusammenschmieden.

The similarities between Celan’s versions of ‘Nous avons fait la nuit’ and Sonnet 105 can be perceived on both thematic and poetological levels. Both Shakespeare’s and Éluard’s poems are in praise of a beloved, and while the theme of constancy has a more significant role in Shakespeare’s poem, it defines Éluard’s poem too. Éluard’s insistent use of the present tense, from the fifth line onwards, suggests a satisfied confidence in the notion that the beloved will remain as she is now. The only future tense of the poem, ‘germera’ (line 4), affirms this confidence by indicating that the beloved’s existing goodness will not change, but merely multiply. Precisely such certitude about the beloved’s constancy in the present and future is expressed in Shakespeare’s fifth line: ‘Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind.’ Shakespeare expresses the consistency of the beloved’s nature, in which several separate attributes become one, in particular in lines 8 and 14: ‘One thing expressing, leaves out difference’; ‘Which three till now never kept seat in one’. This notion of the unification of a multitude into one figure is expressed at the end of Éluard’s poem: ‘Une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j’aime.’

The thematic similarities between these two poems might not be conspicuous, nor even of particular interest, if Celan had not brought them together by translating them. Nor is the mere fact that they are both part of Celan’s corpus of translations enough to motivate this juxtaposition. However, Celan’s similar treatment of their common theme of constancy invites a comparison. This similarity is most immediately evident in the phrase ‘in eins’, which occurs in both the translations (Shakespeare, line 11; Éluard, line 17). This lexical correspondence suggests the existence of analogous poetological elements in

the two poems, expressing the notion that poetry can forge disparate elements into one unit.

The impression of assimilating disparate elements is suggested by the end of Shakespeare's poem. His sonnet closes with a negative phrase, which affirms that the three separate virtues, 'fair, kind and true', have been united for the first time in his beloved: 'Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone. / Which three till now never kept seat in one.' In his translation, Celan suppresses the negative turn of phrase, focusing instead on the concept of unity and on the poet's capacity to unify: "Schön, gut und treu" so oft getrennt, geschieden. / In Einem will ich drei zusammenschmieden'. The transformation of the subject from the three virtues, in Shakespeare's line, to the speaker in Celan's version, transfers the unifying force from the beloved to the speaker/poet: 'will *ich* drei zusammenschmieden' (my emphasis).

Shakespeare's poem combines the speaker and the poet into one figure, since the speaker relates both his beloved and his poetry to one another, such as in the lines: 'Still constant in a wondrous excellence, / Therefore my verse to constancy confined'. This association of the speaker with the poet is less explicit, but nevertheless present, in Éluard's poem. For example, in the line 'Je grave sur un roc l'étoile de tes forces' a connection is made between the speaker's writing and the beloved. The speaker and the poet are identified yet more closely with one another in Celan's translation of this poem, in particular in his rendering of Éluard's line: 'Et dans ma tête qui se met doucement d'accord avec la tienne avec la nuit'. The German version is more active, emphasising the agency of the speaker/poet: 'Leise / stimme ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimme sie / in eins mit der Nacht.' The passive phrase 'dans ma tête' is replaced by the unequivocally active 'ich',

paralleling the emphasis on the speaker's agency in the final line of Celan's version of Shakespeare's sonnet: 'In Einem will ich drei zusammenschmieden'.

The affirmation of the speaker's agency in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is also intensified by the rendering of the phrase 'se mettre d'accord' with 'abstimmen auf'. The French phrase contributes to the impression that the speaker's consciousness is detached from his agency, reflecting a surrealist surrender to the Unconscious. Celan's phrase replaces this apparent lack of awareness with a confident assertion of the poet's capacity to tune three realms into one another: those of the speaker, the addressee and the night. Thus, this phrase resembles the final line of his version of Shakespeare's sonnet: 'In Einem will ich drei zusammenschmieden.' This similarity between the role of the poet/speaker in each of these translations suggests that images of unity related to the beloved in the original poems are transformed into poetological statements of the poet's capacity to unify disparate elements.

Celan's version of Sonnet 105 has a particular resonance in scholarship on Celan's oeuvre because it is the subject of one of the first critical studies of Celan's translation work itself. In 1972, Szondi's *Celan-Studien* were published posthumously, including an essay on Celan's translation of Sonnet 105.⁹ In his essay, Szondi argues that this translation is paradigmatic of Celan's use of language, in that it reveals how Celan's relationship to language is fundamentally different from what Szondi describes as a traditional, rhetorical use of language such as Shakespeare's. Where Shakespeare's poem thematises constancy on a discursive and lexical level, speaking about it and using terms that indicate that theme, such as 'still' and 'ever', Celan's version performs the constancy through its

⁹ Szondi, 'Poetry of Constancy – Poetik der Beständigkeit: Celans Übertragung von Shakespeares Sonett 105', in *Schriften*, II, 321-44.

linguistic structures.¹⁰ As such, the structure of Celan's poem is constitutive of its meaning. A prime example of a structure in Celan's poem that is deemed 'constant' by Szondi is the German version of line 4: 'von ihm, an ihn und immer ihm zulieb'. Szondi asserts that the regular spacing of the vowels in this line, in particular the 'i', renders the line itself constant. He thus concludes, in a formulation that can summarise his argument:

Beständigkeit ist hier [...] kein bloß Gemeintes, sondern dem Vers selbst eigen. Insofern spricht Celans Sprache nicht von etwas, sondern selbst. Sie spricht von den Dingen und von der Sprache, indem sie, durch die Art, in der sie, spricht.¹¹

Central to Szondi's reading of Celan's poem is the idea that, while Shakespeare's poem describes constancy (it is 'diskursiv'), the whole of Celan's poem, from start to finish, is constant ('metadiskursiv'). So for this interpretation to work, Szondi has to submit each line of Celan's poem to the overarching rule that it is 'speaking' constancy. Such an approach, while producing a compelling and comprehensive reading on its own terms, ultimately restricts the interpretation of the translation as a whole and in particular of certain lines that appear not to fit into Szondi's scheme. I argue that interpretations of two sentences in particular are more plausible when read outside of the scheme imposed by Szondi, and instead in the context of the other 'in eins' poems. The following analyses of these sentences (lines 10-12), in the light of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' in particular, show how they may be interpreted differently from Szondi's reading, and explore the implications of this new reading for Celan's poetics.

¹⁰ Thomas Pepper summarises Szondi's thesis by stating that Szondi departs 'from a view of translation as paraphrase into one of translation as performance'. Pepper, 'Er, or, Borrowing from Peter to Pay Paul', in Aris Fioretos (ed.), *Word Traces*, pp. 353-68 (p. 358).

¹¹ Szondi, 'Poetry of Constancy', p. 332.

The first of these sentences is one that Szondi considers exemplary of Celan's use of language. Line 10 of Shakespeare's poem reads: "Fair, kind, and true" varying to other words'; and it has been rendered by Celan as "Schön, gut und treu" – stets anders und stets das.' In Szondi's view Shakespeare's line implies that it is possible to say the same thing using different words, and therefore suggests that there is no essential relationship between the word and the object that it designates. That is to say it must be possible to differentiate fully between word and meaning. However, Szondi's reading of Celan's poem is founded on the idea that the poem's very linguistic structures, down to its individual phonemes and the relationships between them, are constitutive of its meaning. For Szondi, then, Celan's poem indicates that one cannot 'vary to other words', for to do so would be to say something different altogether. In relation to this disjuncture between Shakespeare's line and the structure of Celan's poem, Szondi argues that Celan highlights what he considers to be the paradoxical nature of Shakespeare's view of language by writing a sentence that is itself paradoxical, 'stets anders und stets das'. Since it is impossible for something to be constantly different ('anders') and the same ('das'), Szondi asserts that Celan thereby undermines the viability of the linguistic concept expressed in Shakespeare's poem.

While it is indeed possible to read the phrase 'stets anders und stets das' as a paradoxical statement that undermines itself and therefore negates the idea that it purports to articulate, it is also worth investigating the extent to which the phrase may be understood at face value. For the 'und' between the two parts and the repetition of 'stets' suggest parity rather than paradox, and this equilibrium places the 'anders' and the 'das' on an equal footing. The resulting implication is that identity and difference may coexist, and therefore that the same words may indeed have different meanings.

A comparison of Celan's Sonnet 105 with his 'Nous avons fait la nuit' elucidates the apparent poetological significance of this juxtaposition of 'anders' and 'das'. The final lines of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' transform Éluard's affirmation of resemblance and novelty into an assertion of identity and repeated difference:

Une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j'aime
Qui est toujours nouveau

du gleichst dir, du gleichst
allem Geliebten, du bist
anders von Mal zu Mal.

This juxtaposition of identity and difference ('gleich' and 'anders'), suggesting the possibility of their co-existence, parallels the sense of the phrase 'stets anders und stets das'. The two translations thus intersect in order to articulate the idea that poetic language can remain the same ('stets das') while constantly being re-created and updated ('stets anders').

This tension between identity and difference is precisely that which structures Celan's poem 'Die Halde', thus rendering that poem an early poetological comment on the tension inherent in Celan's understanding of poetic language. The impression given in 'Die Halde', that the unity of the two figures repeatedly falls apart, and that they consequently require a renewed integration, is also suggested by the sentence that follows Celan's phrase 'stets anders und stets das' in his version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105:

Ich find, erfind – um sie in eins zu bringen,
sie einzubringen ohne Unterlaß.

The phrase 'ohne Unterlaß' closes the final quatrain, suggesting a cycle of repetition rather than a continuous state. Szondi does not discuss this last phrase, concentrating instead on the phonetic similarity of the phrases preceding it: 'um sie in eins zu bringen, / sie einzubringen'. He argues that the paronomasia of these phrases suggests the equation of 'in eins setzen' (interpreted by Szondi as 'Vereinen') and 'einbringen' (interpreted as 'Ins-Werk-Setzen', 'to put into the artwork'). Consequently, Szondi argues that for Celan, 'Ins-Werk-Setzen' is the same as 'Vereinen', which reaches the core of the meaning of Celan's Sonnet 105 according to Szondi: to write poetry is to unify disparate elements, so reducing difference.¹²

However, the phrase 'ohne Unterlaß', for which there is no equivalent in the original version, modifies this relationship between the concepts of 'in eins bringen' and 'einbringen'. The necessity of unifying these phrases incessantly suggests that the difference between them continues to reassert itself. As well as expressing continuity, this couplet thus also articulates the difference that repeatedly interrupts that continuity, and that therefore continually requires the poet's active intervention: 'ich find, erfind'. The ongoing oscillation between identity and difference that has been identified in Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' and in his poem 'Die Halde' is thus also evident here.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the verbs 'finden' and 'erfinden' may be read as an illustration of the act of translation, which supports this interpretation of Celan's Sonnet 105 as a metapoetic comment on the translation process. While the original poet 'invents' (as in Shakespeare's line), the translator 'finds' the original poem and then 'invents' the new translated version. The line 'Ich find, erfind – um sie in eins zu bringen' thereby

¹² Szondi's understanding of Celan's poetic language as an agent that overcomes difference is evident in the conclusion to his essay on 'Engführung', in which he states that Celan's poem renders 'die Einheit dessen sichtbar, was verschieden nur schien.' Szondi, 'Durch die Enge geführt', p. 389.

functions as an illustration of the translation process, just as the phrase from 'Nous avons fait la nuit' does: 'Leise / stimme ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine.' On this account, these phrases conceptualise translation as the moment at which identity and difference may coincide, and therefore as the site of permanent difference.

In this way, Celan's versions draw Shakespeare's sonnet and Éluard's poem together, inserting poetological connotations into the love poems to create texts that, particularly when juxtaposed with one another, modify the concept of constancy that both the originals espouse. The possibility of permanent sameness is replaced with that of a tension between identity and difference, which ensures the continuing vitality and individuality of the poem. In respect of this tension, 'Die Halde' also figures as an intertext of Celan's translations of these two poems. Therefore, 'Die Halde' can be read as a poetological reflection on both metaphor and translation that pre-dates 'Nous avons fait la nuit', while Celan's version of Sonnet 105 represents a continuation of that reflection after the publication of 'Nous avons fait la nuit'.

3 'In Eins'

Located within this network of texts that relate to 'Nous avons fait la nuit' is a poem that takes the key phrase 'in eins' as its very title. As the title suggests, this poem can be read as a programmatic text that thematises the interconnection suggested by the series of 'in eins' poems.¹³

IN EINS

¹³ Schmall notes the link between Celan's version of Shakespeare's sonnet and the poem 'In Eins', in that the latter, by bringing together disparate historical elements, ensures the constancy ('Beständigkeit') of the memory of these events. Schmall, 'Übersetzen als Sprung: Textgenetische und poetologische Beobachtungen an Celans Übersetzungen von Shakespeares Sonetten', *Aradia*, 32 (1997), 119-47 (p. 126).

Dreizehnter Feber. Im Herzmund
erwachtes Schibboleth. Mit dir,
Peuple
De Paris. *No pasarán.*

Schäpfchen zur Linken: er, Abadias,
der Greis aus Huesca, kam mit den Hunden
über das Feld, im Exil
stand weiß eine Wolke
menschlichen Adels, er sprach
uns das Wort in die Hand, das wir brauchten, es war
Hirten-Spanisch, darin,

im Eislicht des Kreuzers 'Aurora':
die Bruderhand, winkend mit der
von den wortgroßen Augen
genommenen Binde – Petropolis, der
Unvergessenen Wanderstadt lag
auch dir toskanisch zu Herzen.

Friede den Hütten!

This poem alludes to a variety of historical events in different European countries, all of which can be subsumed under the general theme of revolution.¹⁴ The poem also contains six different languages (German, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek) as well as citations relating to revolutionary events, the last of which is translated from French into German.¹⁵ Since particular languages seem to be employed here to refer to specific events in their speakers' history, the poem may suggest that a language contains essential markers of these events. As such, the poem would seem to reflect a different view of the

¹⁴ See Wiedemann's commentary on this poem in Celan, *Die Gedichte*, pp. 700-02.

¹⁵ The final line of the poem, 'Friede den Hütten', is italicised, marking itself out as a citation. It refers to Büchner's quotation of a German translation of the French Revolutionary chant 'Guerre aux châteaux! Paix aux chaumières!' in *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834), in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, II, 34-61 (pp. 34-35).

relationship between language and reality from that expressed by Shakespeare in his Sonnet 105. For in that poem the speaker suggests that the same thing can be denoted using different words, so divorcing word and meaning. By contrast, in 'In Eins' the use of particular languages apparently to refer to specific events in individual countries could imply that words and their singular meanings remain bound to one another.

Yet the fact that each signifier in 'In Eins' can in effect allude to multiple events, people or places complicates this apparently monological relationship. For example, the word 'Feber', most common in Austrian German, and appearing here in conjunction with the name 'Petropolis', has been interpreted by John Felstiner and Barbara Wiedemann as referring to the suicide of the Austrian-Jewish writer Stefan Zweig in February 1942 in the Brazilian town of Petropolis. Yet Felstiner also points out that 'Petropolis' was the name that Osip Mandelstam gave to St Petersburg; and Wiedemann adds to this reference the name of a Russian-language publishing house in Berlin in the inter-war years.¹⁶ The phrase 'No pasarán' ('They shall not pass') in line 4 marks a similar point of confluence. It was the chant of the Republican forces during the early years of the Spanish Civil War, as they struggled to defend Madrid against the incursions of the Nationalists, and it subsequently became an international anti-fascist slogan, synonymous with resistance. The italicisation of 'No pasarán' in 'In Eins' marks it as a citation, which, in conjunction with the preceding phrase 'peuple / De Paris', also evokes a poem entitled 'No Pasaran' (1937) by the Parisian poet Robert Desnos.¹⁷ Desnos's poem expresses solidarity with the Republicans' struggles during the Spanish Civil War as well as hope for a peaceful future. In turn, this association of Desnos with resistance and revolution recalls the French poet's own work for the French resistance movement during the

¹⁶ Felstiner, p. 188; Celan, *Die Gedichte*, pp. 701-702.

¹⁷ Desnos, *Œuvres*, pp. 825-26.

Second World War. This multitude of overlapping references is therefore more in line with the linguistic view expressed in Shakespeare's Sonnet 105 than is initially apparent. The suggestion is not that each word is attached to one particular meaning or event, but that the word remains open to an endless series of past, present and future references. So the word may remain the same, but be different at each moment. The tension between identity and difference identified in all the 'in eins' poems thus also structures and defines 'In Eins'.

The idea that the poem remains open in this way is expressed in Celan's poetological writings. In these works, Celan suggests that to say that one term or image may have a series of different referents does not mean that the poem has no specific reference points nor that it entirely ignores external reality. Rather, Celan argues that a poem that takes a universal and general theme will ultimately fail to engage with any specific time. This rejection of supposed universality is implicit in his dismissal in the *Bremer Rede* of the timeless poem: 'Denn das Gedicht ist nicht zeitlos. Gewiß, es erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, es sucht, durch die Zeit hindurchzugreifen – durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg' (III, 186).¹⁸ This quotation articulates the central concept in Celan's understanding of the relationship between the poem and time, for it suggests that a poem can be both specific (rooted in a particular time) and endless (referring to all times), just as the apparent openness of reference in 'In Eins' indicates.

¹⁸ This rejection of timelessness is already evident in 'Edgar Jené', in that the interlocutor, whose view is undermined within the text, wishes to break down the barrier between the past, present and future in order to attain a timeless state in which words would remain fixed solely to their primitive meanings. Cf. Dorothee Kohler-Luginbühl, *Poetik im Lichte der Utopie: Paul Celans poetologische Texte* (Bern: Lang, 1986), p. 19.

This apparent paradox between specificity and endlessness is further expounded in the *Meridian* speech, in which Celan states that all ‘Dichtung’ refers to, or is influenced by, certain dates:

Dichtung, darunter verstehe ich keineswegs nur die Lyrik; der Roman, das Drama, sie alle ~~schreiben wohl werden können wohl~~, auf ihre Weise, wie das Gedicht, unter solchen Daten geschrieben werden. (M 32/30b)

The reference to ‘solche Daten’ in this note appears to refer to a quotation from *Der Meridian*, in which 20 January is named as the kind of date from which all contemporary poetry emerges:

Vielleicht darf man sagen, daß jedem Gedicht sein ‘20. Jänner’ eingeschrieben bleibt? Vielleicht ist das Neue an den Gedichten, die heute geschrieben werden, gerade dies: daß hier am deutlichsten versucht wird, solcher Daten eingedenk zu bleiben? Aber schreiben wir uns nicht alle von solchen Daten her? Und welchen Daten schreiben wir uns zu? (III, 196)

In the speech, Celan connects 20 January to Büchner’s character Lenz in his novella, since the story begins: ‘Den 20. Jänner ging Lenz durchs Gebirg.’ Yet 20 January was also the date of the Wannsee Conference in 1942, when the decision was made by high-ranking Nazi officials to exterminate European Jewry. Therefore, 20 January represents an encounter between the literary-historical (Büchner’s *Lenz*) and the historical (the Wannsee Conference). The historical element also includes the author on whom Büchner’s novella was based, J.M.R. Lenz (1751-92). Celan mentions Lenz again towards the end of his *Meridian* speech, in conjunction with ‘den Ort meiner eigenen Herkunft’, since Lenz was, like Celan, a German-speaking writer born in Eastern Europe (in Livonia, now Latvia). The reference to 20 January thus brings to mind Celan’s own past as well as

the history of Eastern European Jewry and its near-eradication during the Holocaust. In addition, the reference to *Lenz* evokes the discourse of psychology, in that Büchner's fragment was based largely on the scientific case-study charting Lenz's descent into madness, by his companion Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740-1826).¹⁹ The date 20 January is thereby a palimpsest, revealing several layers of potential allusions over a long period of time.

Celan's assertion that poems are written 'unter solchen Daten' thus reflects the ways in which the apparent specificity of dating actually opens the poem up to a multitude of past reference points and therefore to a mass of potential future references.²⁰ Dating an event confirms that the past event is remembered in the present, so bringing the past into the present.²¹ In this context, the compilation of dates and data in 'In Eins' reflects Celan's consideration of the date in *Der Meridian*. By suggesting that the date, and therefore the poem, remain open to change as a result of the infinite number of potential referents that may be attributed to it, Celan implies that the poem stands in a constantly shifting relationship to external reality, and is therefore defined by permanent difference.

The poem 'In Eins' thus suggests that the interweaving of signifiers creates a poem that comprises a series of unique moments of union. The poem exists not as a permanent continuum but as a series of different moments, and therefore is always simultaneously transitory and infinite. It is precisely this transience that is suggested by the emphasis on

¹⁹ Oberlin's account of Lenz's stay is given in Büchner's *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, I, 436-83.

²⁰ In his essay on Celan's poetry and poetics entitled 'Schibboleth pour Paul Celan' (1982), Jacques Derrida argues that a date is both singular and unrepeatable, since it suggests one individual and specific time, and yet at the same time it is endlessly recurrent, since every year will have, for example, a 20 January. Derrida, *Schibboleth pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1986).

²¹ The elision of the poem and the date is suggested in part by the meaning of the German word 'Datum' in Latin: 'a given'. Celan referred to the poem as a gift ('ein Geschenk') several times. See Celan's letter to Hans Bender of 18 May 1960, which contains the phrase: 'Gedichte, das sind auch Geschenke'. Hans Bender (ed.), *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer: Lyriker zu ihren Gedichten* (Munich: List, 1961), pp. 86-87 (p. 86).

the temporary nature of the union in 'Die Halde' and 'Nous avons fait la nuit' and by the necessity of repeated unification in Celan's Sonnet 105. The juxtaposition of these texts suggests a conception of poetry as the unification of disparate elements, whereby the difference is not eradicated but continually reasserts itself and thus is repeatedly unified.

4 Communicating Vessels

This idea that language is in a state of permanent flux has already been identified in Celan's essay 'Edgar Jené', in which the constant transformation ('unausgesetzte Verwandlung') of language is represented as the result of the interaction between language and real events. Since in 'Edgar Jené' the Holocaust past is implicit in these references to reality, the emphasis remains on the sinister and potentially destructive impact of this interaction with reality. Consequently, linguistic signification is represented as the result of communication between existing meanings and the new connotations attributed to language by these real events, and this dialogue is designated 'Zwiesprache [...] mit den finstern Quellen.' In the surrealist context of 'Edgar Jené', this dialogue may be understood to represent the permanent communication between the conscious and unconscious realms, as Breton advocated in *Les Vases communicants*. In the following section, I show that this theory of communication was not restricted to Celan's involvement with surrealist artists during the late 1940s, but remained central to Celan's poetics, such that in his poetological writings in the late 1950s and early 1960s he uses the metaphor of communicating vessels as a cipher for his conception of intertextuality. Consequently, a consideration of Celan's use of this motif enriches an understanding of his poetics, in particular those theories expressed in his Büchner Prize speech, and facilitates an interpretation of the tension between identity and difference that has been observed in Celan's translations and in the 'in eins' poems.

This analysis of Celan's poetics in the light of the motif of the communicating vessels therefore both adds to and modifies existing interpretations of his poetics. As outlined in Chapter 2, scholarship to date on Celan's work has tended to marginalise the significance of Celan's reception of surrealism for his poetry and poetics beyond the 1940s. Most recently, Florence Pennone has mentioned Celan's citation of the image of communicating vessels but treated it separately from her inquiry into his theory of poetic translation and poetry.²² By contrast, the following examination of Celan's poetics in the light of his comments on communicating vessels shows that a consideration of his reception of that surrealist image enriches an understanding of his poetics.

(a) Encounters with Büchner

On learning in May 1960 that he was to be awarded the Büchner Prize, Celan wrote to Hermann Kasack, the chairman of the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, which grants the prize (M 222). This letter contains some phrases that are repeated verbatim in the *Meridian* speech, and as such it gives an insight into the more obscure parts of that text. Celan states that he perceives the award as an encounter with Büchner:

Diesen Preis, der den Namen Georg Büchners trägt, annehmen zu dürfen: mir bedeutet das, vor allem, Begegnung. Begegnung, Menschennähe, Begegnung mit einem hohen Namen der Seelenmonade Mensch. (M 222; Celan's underlining)

Celan's association of the award with 'Begegnung' and 'Menschennähe' suggests in part the comfort and satisfaction that he derives from such recognition, and from the fact that his name may now be uttered alongside that of Büchner.

However, as Celan's letter continues, the notion of encounter takes on a different tone. Celan's knowledge of this new conjunction with Büchner triggers the recollection of a

²² Pennone, p. 103.

series of other, apparently coincidental, encounters between himself and Büchner, which constitute the 'Vorgeschichte' of the award:

Vor ungefähr einem Jahr, im August 1959, schrieb ich, nach einem längeren Aufenthalt im Gebirge, eine kleine (ganz kleine) Geschichte: 'Gespräch im Gebirg'. Und da ~~heißt~~ hieß es, unvermutet und überraschend auch für mich, von einem Juden, daß er wie Lenz durchs Gebirg ging...

Später, nach Monaten, hatte ich, nach vielen, über den Schriften Kafkas verbrachten Stunden, mit den Studenten der Ecole Normale Supérieure Büchner zu lesen und zu interpretieren. Und da kam, im Lenz, der Ewige Jude wieder...

Und Samstag, ich war noch in Frankfurt, erreichte mich, aus Berlin, der Brief eines jungen Amerikaners, der einiges von mir übersetzt hat; er stellt sich vor: als Übersetzer von Büchners Lenz... (M 222)

All of these encounters revolve around Büchner's novella *Lenz* (1835), which was also to occupy a significant position in Celan's *Meridian* speech. The postulated communication is thus not just between Celan and Büchner, but between Celan, Büchner, Büchner's character 'Lenz', J.M.R. Lenz and Kafka. Crucial to this idea of communication is Celan's assertion that the emergence of Lenz in 'Gespräch im Gebirg' was unexpected: 'unvermutet und überraschend auch für mich'. The notion that there is an unintentional element to Celan's writing is made explicit here, implying that there are unconscious or sub-conscious forces at work in his composition.

A further indication of the presence of unconscious impulses within texts is produced by the resemblance between Celan's narration of this series of encounters and Breton's description of unexpected links between real events in *Les Vases communicants*. Both Breton and Celan narrate a series of perceived coincidences, only remarkable because of an initial encounter (for Breton, a literal encounter with a beggar; for Celan, the encounter with Büchner through the award of the Büchner Prize); and both marvel at the

unexpected and yet compelling nature of these coincidences. Furthermore, both sets of chance encounters end with a letter about the respective writer's work: Breton receives a letter from the editor of a journal about his second surrealist manifesto; and Celan receives a letter from a writer who has translated both Celan's poetry and Büchner's *Lenz*. Breton recounts these coincidences in order to support his theory of the parallels between unconscious structures and real life, such that the chance encounters typical of dream are just as likely to occur in waking reality. Consequently, the similarities between Breton's and Celan's narratives suggest that the coincidences described by Celan in his letter to Kasack also resemble unconscious structures.

The analogy between these coincidences and unconscious structures is intensified in Celan's letter to Kasack by his designation of this series of Büchner-related events as the 'Vorgeschichte' of the Büchner Prize. Celan thus implies that they are separate from (in that they precede) this latest encounter with Büchner and yet that they form an integral part of the award. Moreover, Celan notes to Kasack that they are 'Ihnen gewiß Unbekanntes'. So the events listed by Celan appear to be located in the unknown, covert layers of reality, which only come to the surface and take on meaning through their communication with the Büchner Prize award, and more explicitly through Celan's correspondence with Kasack. These incidents may consequently be conceptualised as the latent reality that underlies the manifest reality of the Büchner Prize itself.

(b) Unintentional encounters

As Celan's letter to Kasack fed into his composition of the Büchner Prize speech, the details that he had given to Kasack of these encounters with Büchner were replaced by the identification of a different set of parallels between his own works and those of Büchner, and were explicitly related to the metaphor of communicating vessels. In *Der*

Meridian, Celan compares Büchner's phrase from *Lenz*, 'nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte', to a stanza from his own poem 'Stimmen' (1953; I, 147):

Stimmen vom Nesselweg her:
Komm auf den Händen zu uns.
Wer mit der Lampe allein ist,
Hat nur die Hand, draus zu lesen.

Although Celan does not state the connection explicitly, it appears that the similarity between these texts lies in the image of walking upside down: on one's head in Büchner's phrase; and on one's hands in the second line of this stanza. The poem 'Stimmen' was written long before Celan received the Büchner Prize; and in a draft version of *Der Meridian* Celan states that when writing 'Stimmen' he was 'Büchner ferne', indicating that the similarity to Büchner's text was at the time unintentional and unnoticed: 'Vor sieben Jahren, ich war Büchner ferne, – **aber es gibt kommunizierende Gefäße** – schrieb ich diese Zeilen' (M 78/82). This connection between Celan and Büchner by way of communicating vessels further supports the similarity identified between Breton's *Vases communicants* and Celan's letter to Kasack. The image of the communicating vessels is crucial to an understanding of this statement, which in turn is fundamental to Celan's concept of unintentional encounters between texts. For rather than suggesting that the similarity between Büchner's phrase and 'Stimmen' represents a random encounter, Celan asserts that it arose from a connection that existed at the time, although it was then unknown to him. By using the image of communicating vessels that, in the context of surrealism, resonates with intimations of the Unconscious, Celan implies that the link between himself and Büchner is not illusory, but represents an encounter in a space that is separate from the realm of conscious poetic intention.

This apparent evocation of an unconscious realm is intensified by Celan's description of the space in which these unexpected encounters take place as 'das Bewußtlose'. For example, in a poetological note that refers once again to the unexpected appearance of Lenz in 'Gespräch im Gebirg', Celan writes:

Intuitives Denken: ~~die Lenz~~ daß ich, in einem Gespräch im Gebirg gen.[anntem] Stück, aus dem Bewußtlosen, nicht Unbewußten, den Lenz kommen sah; und als sich mir dann, im Mai, auch mein Landsmann Karl-Emil Franzos, mit einigem Vergessen, sich in diesen Zusammenhang fügte... (M 79/85)

By stating that Lenz emerged 'aus dem Bewußtlosen, nicht Unbewußten', Celan explicitly distances his thought from Freudian theory, but still implies the existence of a realm that is separate from consciousness. Indeed, by describing Lenz as materialising 'aus dem Bewußtlosen', he invokes the image of a covert realm from which these impulses emerge.

(c) Der Meridian

This image of a network of writers and texts and its association with apparently unconscious impulses comes to a climax at the end of *Der Meridian*, when Celan introduces the meridian metaphor itself. Although Celan excised references to 'das Bewußtlose' and communicating vessels from the final version of this speech, a consideration of the meridian metaphor in the light of these two ideas demonstrates that it cannot be understood fully without the specific conception of the Unconscious that these images imply.

At the end of *Der Meridian*, Celan completes the circle of links between himself and Büchner with a reference to Karl Emil Franzos, the first editor of Büchner's complete

works, who, like Celan, attended school in Czernowitz (III, 201-02). Celan notes that he has been reunited with Franzos through reading Büchner, and so it is as a result of the Büchner prize that they have come into contact again. Franzos is therefore Celan's '*hier wiedergefundener Landsmann*' (III, 202; Celan's emphasis). Through the Büchner Prize, in Darmstadt in 1960, Celan has therefore been brought closer to his birthplace and so to times both in the early twentieth century, when Celan lived in Czernowitz, and in the second half of the nineteenth, when the city was part of the Habsburg Empire and when Franzos lived there. It is these links between writers, which span centuries and continents, that Celan denotes the 'Meridian':

Ich finde etwas – wie die Sprache – Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden Pole in sich selbst Zurückkehrendes und dabei – heitererweise – sogar die Tropen Durchkreuzendes –: ich finde ... einen *Meridian*. (III, 202)²³

Crucially, Celan's detection of this meridian only occurs at the end of his speech, after he has related his encounters with Büchner, Franzos *et al.* So it seems that these encounters, and therefore the meridian, only become perceptible through the award of the Büchner Prize itself.

A consideration of the literal meaning of the term 'meridian' sheds light on this inherent connection between the award of the Büchner Prize and the discovery of these encounters. The image of a meridian is associated with navigation and orientation, as a way of locating and orientating oneself without recourse to physical reference points. This act of orientation does not require any physical landmarks, but is largely dependent on the traveller knowing the time and the so-called datum. The first, the time, is essential

²³ The ellipsis and emphasis in this quotation are Celan's own.

for the accurate measurement of longitude; and the second is the geographical term used to define the given level from which heights and depths are measured (also referred to as ‘zero elevation’).²⁴ A particular point on the earth’s surface will have different coordinates depending on the datum used to make the measurement, and consequently efforts were made during the twentieth century to standardise the datum world-wide. These efforts gained momentum in the late 1950s, resulting in the so-called World Geodetic System of 1960 (known as WGS60).²⁵ Celan’s use of the image of a meridian and of the term ‘Datum’ (the geographical term is the same in the German language) in his speech given in October 1960 is thus timely, and renders a correlation between the geographical meaning and his primarily literary considerations yet more compelling.

This interpretation of the terms ‘meridian’ and ‘datum’ informs an understanding of the connection between both terms as they are used by Celan. As discussed above, Celan asserts that all poems are written with certain dates in mind. The geographical import of the term ‘datum’ leads to two new inferences from this assertion: firstly, that if the dates according to which these poems are received are different for each individual reader, then the meaning of the poem itself (like the perceived geographical position) will vary; and secondly, that meridians can only be established if they are based on the same date. The second of these possible interpretations recalls Celan’s statement in *Der Meridian* that the 20 January may be inscribed into every poem (III, 196). Since at the end of his speech Celan claims to have found a meridian, it follows that his measurements are based on the same dates or data as of those whom he places on his meridian line, in this case Büchner, Franzos and Lenz. The ‘20 Jänner’ thus becomes a fixed point within the network of

²⁴ For an explanation of the role of time in measuring longitude, see Paul L. Hancock and Brian J. Skinner (eds), *The Oxford Companion to The Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 399.

²⁵ Cf. James R. Smith’s *Introduction to Geodesy. The History and Concepts of Modern Geodesy* (New York: Wiley, 1997), p. 83 and pp. 125-37. The fact that the WGS60 was developed by the United States Defence Department, primarily to facilitate the orientation of missiles (p. 135), adds a belligerent connotation to the image of the meridian and of the datum.

writers, places and events to which Celan alludes in *Der Meridian*, shared by these writers and integral to their self-definition. Just as any geographical meridian can only be located by others if they all measure it according to the same datum, so Celan only recognises who else is located on his meridian if he defines it according to one specific datum, such as the 20 January. The award of the Büchner Prize itself is also a datum from which Celan measures his meridian, since it leads him to establish connections with Büchner, Franzos and Lenz.

The geographical image of a meridian as a line connecting two or more points also resembles Breton's image of the conductive wire in *Les Vases communicants*. Nevertheless, the meridian differs from the conductive wire in that the former is circular while the latter has defined end points. So, unlike the conductive wire, the meridian has the potential for endless conduction and communication. In this respect, the meridian is closer to the image of communicating vessels itself, since the vessels allow for ongoing communication. A connection between Celan's metaphors of the meridian and of the communicating vessels is made by Celan himself in a draft letter to Otto Pöggeler (29 August 1961), in which he tells of a recent coincidence that he regards as evidence of the figurative existence of meridians:

Vielleicht darf ich Ihnen eine kleine 'meridianhafte' Geschichte erzählen? Als ich aus Darmstadt zurückkam, stieß ich in einem Sammelband über den Barock auf ein Kepler-Zitat. Es lautete ungefähr (ich zitiere aus dem Gedächtnis) so: 'Gott ist symbolisiert durch die Kugel. Der Schnitt durch die Kugel ist der Kreis; dieser bezeichnet den Menschen.'

Ja, es gibt wohl (und das hat wohl andere als literarische Gründe) 'Zusammenhänge'. Kommunizierende Röhren und Gefäße, – es gibt ein (schwer zu 'ortendes') Zueinander.²⁶

²⁶ DLA: D 90.1.934.

This quotation is of great significance for an understanding of the import of the meridian image in Celan's poetics. Celan considers it remarkable that he came across this quotation from the seventeenth-century astronomer Johannes Kepler on his return from Darmstadt, where he had given the *Meridian* speech, because of the similarity it bears to his own image of the meridian at the end of his Büchner Prize Speech (III, 202; cited above).²⁷ Although Celan refers to the communicating vessels in the context of literary connections, he indicates that he is not making only a literary critical comment. The implication is that the reason for these connections lies beyond the literary realm of conscious allusion and citation, indeed perhaps that it lies beyond the sphere of human action itself, in the unknowable realms of the supernatural or of the Unconscious. Consequently, Celan's words recall Breton's thesis in *Les Vases communicants* that apparently random coincidences are in fact manifestations of objective necessity, connected by invisible meridians.

Celan's concept of what is meridian-like, perceived as a 'Zueinander' in his letter to Pöggeler, mirrors the idea of mutual and involuntary attraction in Breton's image of the conductive wire. Yet Celan's explicit use of the image of communicating vessels ('kommunizierende Röhren und Gefäße') in the same comment also establishes a different picture: that of an intermediary realm within which two substances intermingle and react with one another. Such an encounter posits the existence of a third space, which is constituted of the interaction of the two separate spheres. If, as Celan's words suggest, this interaction is between two literary works, then the third space represents shared poetic space. By its nature, that space is not extrinsic to the two works but

²⁷ Kepler put forward the notion of a harmony between the processes of the universe and events on earth. This conception of the accord of the macrocosm and the microcosm thereby represents an idea akin to Breton's notion of the interaction between dream and reality in *Les Vases communicants*, in that they both imply the correspondence of two distinct realms.

becomes part of each of them. As such, the shared content is an essential constituent of the identities of both works.

(d) Begegnung – Selbstbegegnung – Heimkehr

In *Der Meridian*, Celan indicates that this theory of shared poetic space is related to his exile status, in that the network of writers is substituted for the home that he has lost.²⁸

These encounters and links between writers replace the physical coordinates of Celan's former home, the city of Czernowitz, which no longer exists in the form in which he once knew it. As part of the former Habsburg Empire, pre-war Czernowitz was defined largely by a multi-lingual and multi-cultural identity, including a significant Jewish population. However, much of this diversity was lost following the collapse of the empire, and a great proportion of the Jewish community fled or was exterminated during the Holocaust.²⁹ The relative significance within *Der Meridian* of this relationship between poetic encounter, home and exile is suggested by Celan's intention to make it the starting-point for his speech:

Anfang: Es gibt, auch im Gedicht, geheime Wege
Czortkow-Czern.[owitz] → Darmstadt. (M 184/749)

The idea that these paths may be 'secret' evokes the invisible meridians spanning the globe, creating connections between particular points that are only perceptible for those who are looking for them and who share the same datum. Moreover, the etymological

²⁸ Cf. Olschner's suggestion that, for Celan, 'language was the part of *Heimat* which was salvaged and thus had to stand for *Heimat*, [...] *Heimat* had become a spiritual and intellectual location, although not a *locus amoenus*.' Olschner, 'Anamnesis: Paul Celan's Translations of Poetry', ACTS, 8/9, 56-89 (p. 64).

²⁹ The notion of homelessness is also expressed at the end of Celan's *Bremer Rede*, in which he claims that he and other poets of his generation are 'zeltlos', evoking the physical and linguistic homelessness of exiled German-language poets after the Second World War. Cf. Olschner's interpretation of certain sections of the *Bremer Rede* (including the term 'zeltlos') as indicative of Celan's position as an exiled author, and the resulting location of his home in language itself, in 'Poetiksplitter des nicht abgelegten Exils', pp. 382-84. The correlation between Celan's concept of home and the Holocaust is expressed in one of his poetological notes: 'Im Gedanken, daß und was und wie sie vertrieben wurden, ist die eigentliche Heimat' (M 200/853; Celan's underlining).

link between the terms 'Heimkehr' and 'Geheimnis' suggests that the poem is constituted by unknown or unexpected ('secret') encounters, which bring the poet closer to home. 'Home' is therefore not a spatial location, nor a sphere that pertains solely to the individual, but is the ever-changing site of encounter between the self and an other or others. As such, Celan's reference to secrets in his poetological note cited above takes on a new resonance. The 'geheime Wege' and the 'Geheimnisse' are initially unnoticed, unknown paths that nevertheless lead one home. Yet this home is not a static space but a point of increased self-knowledge, as a result of the convergence of the self and the other.

One of Celan's poetological notes posits such a link between homecoming and self-knowledge: 'Eine Art Heimkehr. / ~~Und ein Sichwiederfinden~~' (M 43/46). This note implies that this encounter with the self is not the discovery of the same self that was perceived before the encounter. Rather, it indicates a conception of the self as in constant flux. Celan's final words in *Der Meridian* on the conjunction between his writing and that of Büchner support this representation of the self. Celan states that when he noticed the allusion to *Lenz* in 'Gespräch im Gebirg', he encountered himself: 'Ich bin... mir selbst begegnet'. This statement posits a doubling of the self, and indeed the separation between the two first persons is represented syntactically by the ellipsis between 'Ich bin' and 'mir'. Celan is thus not merely suggesting that the writer's self-knowledge is enhanced by the recognition of these unintentional and unknown intertextual encounters, but that a new self, distinct from the original 'ich', is constructed. The recognition of these instances of communication is thus integral to the individual's self-definition.

(e) Lived Experience

The role of the poet's own lived experience in this discovery of unknown elements in the poem is suggested in a letter from Celan to Gisèle Celan-Lestrange in September 1962.³⁰ Here, Celan tells his wife of a walk that he has taken, during which his observation of certain kinds of flowers recalls particular poems and translations that he has recently completed. His explanation of these recollections sets up a similar web of encounters to that described in his letter to Kasack. For example, Celan states that he has seen the flower 'le colchique' (known in English as an autumn crocus, and in German as 'die Zeitlose'), and that it reminded him of a poem he had recently written and sent to Celan-Lestrange, which contains the phrase: 'die Zeitlose im Aug, die Mutterblume'.³¹ This leads Celan to recall that he had written that poem after receiving a letter from his friend Erich Einhorn, telling Celan that he was to spend his holidays in a place called 'Kolchis', on the Black Sea. According to Bertrand Badiou, this place has a twofold significance for Celan. Firstly, its location in Eastern Europe reminds Celan of the place where he grew up; and secondly, as the place to which Ovid was banished it represents persecution and exile and therefore Celan's own life experience.³² Thus this sighting of a single flower sets off a chain of associations that uncover elements in Celan's own poems that he had not realised were there. The 'geheime Wege' that converge in his poems are consequently brought into the light.

In this letter to his wife, Celan comments that this association of 'colchique' and 'die Zeitlose', which he designates a 'dialogue, un peu extra-humain', is 'un echo secret de la "Zeitlose", suscité par le réel.' This notion that the individual's lived experience ('le réel':

³⁰ Celan – Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondence*, I, 141-42.

³¹ This quotation is Celan's transcription of a phrase from his poem 'Die Silbe Schmerz'. In the published version of the poem it reads: 'die Zeit- / lose im Aug, die Mutter- / Blume' (1962; I, 280).

³² Celan – Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondence*, II, 157-58.

here, his glimpse of the flower) may be at the root of such reminiscence and consequent enhanced understanding, through the new dimensions that it adds to past events and writings, is central to a further statement by Celan about communicating vessels, which makes plain the connection between this metaphor and his view of translation. In a note (dated 27 March 1962) on his version of a poem by the Russian poet Sergei Esenin, entitled (in his translation) 'Kein Lied nach meinem mehr' (V, 218-19), Celan remarks that other impulses have entered the poem in his version:

Ce vers de Essenine, qui, textuellement, veut dire 'Je suis le dernier poète du village', et que j'ai traduit, 'librement', c'est-à-dire en obéissant à toutes mes lois – qui sont aussi celles de mon époque et celle [*sic*] du temps vécu – par 'Kein Lied nach meinem mehr, vom Dorf zu singen'... Ce 'Dorf', ce Village, n'est-il pas, chez moi, le Village du 'Château' de Kafka? Vases Communicants – communiquant [*sic*] à travers la vie, grâce à la vie.³³

A shift in tone from Esenin's line to Celan's version is indeed evident. The opening line of Esenin's poem may be read as a rejection of the nature poetry associated with village life (which in turn evokes the Jewish *shtetl* of Central and Eastern Europe) and an attendant turn towards the city, so reflecting the poet's changing concerns during these times of urbanisation and revolution.³⁴ In Celan's version, the phrase takes on a more existential tone, implying that the singing will soon cease, and indicating the silence that will follow. The resulting impression of solitude and isolation, of things drawing to a close, and of the mortality of the speaker, takes the poem out of the specific

³³ Celan, 'Mikrolithen sind, Steinchen'. *Die Prosa aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. by Barbara Wiedemann and Bertrand Badiou (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 40 (note 53.4) (Celan's underlining).

³⁴ Olschner discusses the significance of Esenin's revolutionary attitude for Celan's translation of his poetry, quoting for example from a letter from Celan to Solomon about Celan's translations of Esenin's poems: 'j'ai essayé de rétablir l'image du poète proche de la Révolution d'octobre.' Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, p. 218.

connotations of Esenin's time. Instead, as Olschner argues, the more universal and poetological notion of 'die Letztmaligkeit der Dichtung' is evoked.³⁵

In addition, Celan's note on this translation suggests that the new connotations of his version should be understood as the product of the communication between Esenin's poem, Kafka's *Das Schloß* and Celan's lived experience. Indeed, when the poem is read in the context of Kafka's novel, the poem's speaker also becomes Kafka's traveller, trapped in the village, lacking existential meaning and purpose and yet unable to leave. Moreover, if Kafka is understood to represent 'das ewige Jude', as Celan suggests in his letter to Kasack, then its association with *Das Schloß* inserts undertones of Jewishness and exile into Esenin's poem. Such connotations are indeed suggested by Celan's assertion that he translated Esenin's poem according to 'mes lois – [...] celles de mon époque et [...] du temps vécu'. And in this apparently biographical context the speaker of the poem is also Celan himself: the last poet of his village, his *Heimat* of Czernowitz that no longer exists as it once did. The phrase 'kein Lied nach meinem mehr, vom Dorf zu singen' thus evokes the biographical and historical event of the loss of the *shtetl* and so expresses a lament at the demise of Jewish culture in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as evoking the poetological connotations of homecoming.

Celan's description of the poem as the site of communication 'à travers la vie' therefore indicates the potential for the translator's lived experience to enter into the poem. Further, the notion that this communication occurs 'grâce à la vie' suggests that the experiences that the reader brings to the poem may lead to the recognition of the poem's latent reality. The phrase 'grâce à la vie' is thus analogous to the moment in Celan's letter to Celan-Lestrange when he perceives new meanings in his own poem 'Die Silbe

³⁵ Olschner, *Der feste Buchstab*, pp. 219-20.

Schmerz' through the sight of the autumn crocus, a perception that he describes as being 'suscité par le réel'.

Celan describes this process of translation according to his own concerns as a 'free' translation, but the inverted commas around that term make the apparent paradox of this formulation evident. For according to Celan, the freedom of his version is a function of the translation's anchorage in the concerns of his epoch and of his lived experience. This seeming paradox is resolved if the translation is conceived as an instance of communicating vessels. For this metaphor suggests that the poem's meaning is composed of the communication between two different levels: the words on the page and the context of their original composition by Esenin (the poem's manifest reality); and the translator's lived experience and reception of other texts and events (its latent reality). The constant interaction between these two levels liberates the poem from any one fixed meaning. The crucial proposition inherent in the image of communicating vessels is that the new connotations are unintentional and unknown at the point of the text's composition.

The existence of an integral connection between a translation's individual concerns and its freedom elucidates the otherwise ambiguous conjunction of individuality and freedom to which Celan repeatedly refers in his poetological writings. The most explicit celebration of this juxtaposition appears in the final version of *Der Meridian*. In response to his own question in that speech of whether art should be expanded ('*Elargissez l'Art!* [...] Die Kunst erweitern?'), Celan responds: 'Nein. Sondern geh mit der Kunst in deine allereigenste Enge. Und setze dich frei' (III, 200).³⁶ The inherent connection between the

³⁶ Odile Heynders points out that the exclamation 'Elargissez l'Art!' refers both to the French dramatist Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814) and to J.M.R. Lenz, since the phrase is a quotation from Mercier's essay 'Du théâtre ou nouvel essai sur l'art dramatique' (1773), and is also cited by the

individual perspective in art ('deine allereigenste Enge') and freedom is thereby unequivocally expressed, yet its full meaning is not made explicit in *Der Meridian*. Nonetheless, when read in conjunction with Celan's comments on 'free' translation, this potential meaning is opened up to the reader. The so-called free translation and the resulting recontextualisation of the original poem exemplifies a process that Celan suggests is inherent in any poetic text, namely that all texts are constituted of the ongoing communication between the manifest context of their original composition and other elements. These additional elements are initially unnoticed, but may emerge later when the poem enters into new encounters.

Celan's comment on his translation of Esenin's poem posits the translation as the site *par excellence* where such unintentional encounters within texts, and consequent recontextualisation, become visible. He suggests that any text is replete with these spectral figures, exemplified in this case by Kafka's novel *Das Schloß*, which is a presence within 'Kein Lied nach meinem mehr' that Celan apparently only noticed after completing the translation. By recognising these spectral intertexts, the poet gains an insight into the network of sources that shapes his own unique personal expression. Therefore, these latent impulses are not coincidental nor extrinsic to the poem's identity, but are integral to it. So the poem always contains the potential for its future meanings.

(f) *Zeitoffenheit*

This celebration of the poem's openness and liberty is encapsulated in the term 'zeitoffen', which Celan uses to describe Mandelstam's poetry. In his radio essay, Celan claims that the notion of poetry's being open to all times is reflected in Mandelstam's

Russian author Rosanow in a book about Lenz. Heynders, 'Die Doppelrolle des Dichters: Spuren von Kleist, Büchner und Nietzsche in Texten Paul Celans', *German Studies Review*, 18 (1995), 87-113 (p. 99). The fact that this quotation evokes Mercier, Lenz, Büchner and Rosanow exemplifies Celan's intertextual approach in *Der Meridian*.

tendency to employ nominal word forms, instead of verbs: '[er] zeigt eine Neigung zum Substantivischen, das Beiwort schwindet, die "infiniten", die Nominalformen des Zeitworts herrschen vor'. And as a result of this focus on nouns, Celan asserts that 'das Gedicht bleibt *zeitoffen*, Zeit kann hinzutreten, Zeit partizipiert' (M 216; Celan's emphasis). These statements posit two kinds of temporal reference: the noun, which is 'infinite' because it does not impose a tense, as verbs do; and the participle, which brings time into the poem ('Zeit *partizipiert*'; my emphasis). This tension between the timeless noun and the timely participle is analogous to the communication between the poem's manifest reality and its latent intertexts. The manifest level is the text itself and the specific context in which it was composed. This identity remains a constant, and so represents the poem's infinite nature. By contrast, the latent intertexts become visible in a series of repeated moments, in particular each time the poem is read or translated, and these moments pinpoint the intrusion ('Hinzutreten') of time. It is this ongoing exchange between the poem's infinite and latent layers that renders the poem a process rather than a static form, and this evolution is reflected in the grammatical form of the participle, which indicates continuous time.

The idea that the poem is the site of ongoing exchange and communication between different temporal layers is rendered more tangible by its description as 'porous', a term used synonymously with 'zeitoffen' in several of Celan's poetological notes (see M 70 in particular). That this image may be understood in conjunction with Celan's discussion of communicating vessels is suggested by the reference to life in the following note: 'Das Gedicht als das keineswegs lückenlos Gefügte, als das Lückenhafte, Besetzbare, Poröse: ("à toi de passer, viel)" (M 194/819).³⁷ Just as Celan implies in his comments on his

³⁷ Cf. 'Gedichte sind Durchgänge: A toi de passer, Viel', a note by Celan dated 26 October 1957. Celan, *Die Prosa aus dem Nachlaß*, p. 19.

translation of Esenin's poem, and in his letter to Celan-Lestrange about 'le colchique', the poem remains open to the infiltration of other elements, including the lived experience of the poet, translator and reader. An association with the image of communicating vessels is suggested by the liquid imagery common to both the vessels and the poem's porosity, and indeed Celan's description of the poem as porous is rendered more meaningful in the light of the motif of communicating vessels. It indicates that the poem's receptiveness to external intertexts, which Celan describes as its 'Besetzbarkeit', does not signify occupation in the sense that an existing set of coordinates is replaced by another. Crucially, the absorption of water in this way does not represent amalgamation or fusion, since the water and the stone remain essentially separate, yet temporarily combine to create a third substance, constituted of the interaction between these two elements. As a metaphor for poetry, this image suggests that these new meanings enter into the poem, filling its pores and so creating a new form, but that they do not destroy the original substance.

This idea that the old and new text remain in tension rather than the latter supplanting the former recalls Markus May's interpretation of Celan's poetics of translation as akin to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of hybridity.³⁸ In the theoretical introduction to his study of Celan's versions of American poetry, May postulates that any translation is a recontextualisation in the light of the new literary, historical and personal coordinates that the translator brings to the poem. When May applies the concept of recontextualisation to Celan's translations themselves, in this case Celan's versions of two poems by Robert Frost, he focuses solely on the idea of conscious intertextual factors. For example, in his interpretation of Celan's version of Frost's 'Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening' May perceives a conscious intertextual connection between Frost's

³⁸ May, pp. 100-12.

poem, Kafka's story *Der Landarzt* and Walter Benjamin's essay 'Franz Kafka', so concluding that the version of Frost's poem was influenced by Celan's reading of Benjamin's essay.³⁹ In addition, in that version of Frost's poem May perceives several similarities to Celan's poem 'Heimkehr' (1955-56; I, 156), and interprets this connection as conscious and intentional, such that the translation appears 'fast wie eine Replik auf den eigenen Text.'⁴⁰ In turn, Celan's poem 'Heimkehr' is related to Kafka's short story with the same title, and May identifies a series of lexical and thematic correspondences between those two texts, which makes Celan's poem appear 'fast als eine Überschreibung des Kafkaeschen Textes.'⁴¹

This idea of writing-over is characteristic of May's approach to these instances of recontextualisation, which he also designates 'die Verschiebung und Überblendung von ursprünglichen Kontexten.'⁴² While these instances of apparent conscious reflection are compelling and can result in the discovery of new dimensions in Celan's poetry and translations, the idea of writing-over that they entail in May's reading does not leave space for the notion that the poem also remains open to unintentional intertextual relations. By contrast, Celan's use of the metaphor of communicating vessels to conceptualise these intertextual relations suggests, first, that the relationship is not one of 'Überschreibung' but of sustained tension; and second, that these intertexts are not necessarily always the result of the translator's conscious intention.

The idea that Celan's theory of the dynamic nature of poetry is intertwined with his reception of the image of communicating vessels also enhances the interpretation of Celan's poetics of translation given by Pennone. She argues that Celan's concept of the

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 249-57.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 241.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 242.

⁴² Ibid., p. 112.

poem's 'Besetzbarkeit' and porosity anticipates theories of reception and intertextuality in the 1980s and 1990s. In her view, Celan's poetic theory suggests that new interpretations of poetic texts may arise from two forms of intertextuality: a reader/translator bringing their own personal context to the poem; and the reader/translator perceiving connections to other texts. Consequently, the poem is always incomplete because new meaning is attributed to it at each moment of reception.⁴³ Celan's association of porosity with the image of communicating vessels produces two new conclusions that modify both Pennone's and May's approaches. Firstly, it appears that Celan's description of the poem as porous and 'zeitoffen' does not only point forwards, anticipating discourses with which Celan did not come into direct contact, but also points back to his engagement with surrealist theory and so itself is a product of intertextual encounter. And secondly, it suggests that Celan considers the poem to be constituted of intertexts that are present in the poem from its conception, but not always or immediately recognised by the poet nor by the reader. In this respect, the poem's future intertexts are immanent in the text from its inception, so that it always contains the potential for its future meanings.

This idea that the poem's future identity is immanent in its original conception is suggested by a draft version of *Der Meridian*, in which Celan cites a phrase from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Das Bergwerk zu Falun* (1899): 'so sind Gedichte nun einmal: monoton: 'keiner wird, was er nicht ist' (M 33/31a).⁴⁴ As Robert Vilain explains in his

⁴³ Pennone, pp. 26-37. The theories of intertextuality and literary translation to which Pennone primarily refers are: Vermeer, 'Übersetzen als kultureller Transfer', in Mary Snell-Hornby (ed), *Übersetzungswissenschaft – eine Neuorientierung. Zur Integrierung von Theorie und Praxis* (Tübingen: Francke, 1986), pp. 30-53; Kristeva, *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969); Meschonnic, 'Poétique de la traduction', in his *Pour la poétique*, II (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 305-405; and Lamping, *Literatur und Theorie. Über poetologische Probleme der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

⁴⁴ The words 'keiner wird, was er nicht ist' are spoken by the old miner Torbern in Act I of Hofmannsthal's *Das Bergwerk zu Falun*.

discussion of the relationship between Celan and Hofmannsthal, this citation from the Austrian author indicates that ‘werden’ is a function of ‘sein’, that one’s future identity is always inscribed in one’s present self.⁴⁵ This concept informs the notion that a poet may uncover unexpected elements of his own work by discovering links to other texts. The fact that these elements are not discovered until after the poem has been composed does not mean that they are not immanent in that original composition. For even if a semantic shift occurs after a text has been written, because of the new connotations that a particular word or image have taken on, it is still possible to say that this shift occurred as a result of the particular construction of the original text, and therefore that this future meaning is inscribed in the original poem.

The implication is therefore that, from its inception, a poem holds within itself the potential for its future encounters and resulting interpretations. This notion of the poem’s latent potential and consequent orientation towards the future is itself reminiscent of surrealist theory, and indeed an explicit comment by Celan about surrealism suggests that it was this element of surrealism in particular that remained significant within his poetics during the 1950s:

Im Surrealismus war mancherlei. Aber in diesem Mancherlei war auch, außer dem gewiß anfechtbaren Psychogramm, dieser – zentrale – Gedanke: Les jeux ne sont pas encore faits – ein jede dichterische Intention begleitender Gedanke. Seither: die Karten sind, ohne gemischt worden zu sein, verteilt; **auf** keiner dieser Karten ist ein Abbild dessen zu sehn, was der Dichter meinen könnte. (M 87/116)

This note is remarkable not least for Celan’s recognition of the diversity of the surrealist project, as addressed in the first chapter of this thesis, and for his explicit rejection of the

⁴⁵ Vilain, pp. 187-88. According to Vilain (p. 186), Celan has marked the phrase ‘Variiertes Grundthema: das Ich als Sein und das Ich als Werden’ in Hofmannsthal’s *Aufzeichnungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), p. 216.

psychoanalytical aspect of the movement. By sidelining this aspect, Celan is able to focus on the facet of surrealism that he considers to be central to that aesthetic: the idea that the poem remains open to an endless series of future interpretations.

The French motto, 'Les jeux sont faits', is the standard call of the croupier in a game of roulette, to announce that no more bets may be placed as the wheel is about to be spun. This call thus asserts that the players can no longer actively change what happens in the future, since the bets that they have already laid will determine their winnings. This gambling analogy recalls the central significance of chance in the surrealist aesthetic, as expressed by Breton in his first manifesto, when he advocated collage and composing poems by the random juxtaposition of newspaper headlines. By changing the French phrase so that it reads 'Les jeux ne sont pas encore faits', Celan emphasises the importance of latent potential in the surrealist aesthetic. He suggests that, according to the surrealist view, the possibilities for the outcome of these games of chance are never closed down, so that surrealist aesthetics are defined by permanent potential. Yet Celan is not seeking merely to define surrealism, but to show that this aspect of surrealism may be understood to be a universal poetic attribute. Thus he implies that the idea of permanent potential is 'ein jede dichterische Intention begleitender Gedanke'. As outlined above, Celan's description of the poem as porous indicates that it is oriented towards the future, such that it is always open to future encounters. His definition of surrealism in this note thus makes patent the point of contact between his reception of that movement and his own poetics.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The second half of Celan's note on surrealism, in which he comments on post-surrealist art, implies a criticism of what is known as concrete poetry, which Celan rejected because of its apparent detachment from external reality and refusal to communicate ('[es gibt kein] Abbild dessen zu sehn, was der Dichter meinen könnte'). Further discussion of Celan's reception of concrete poetry goes beyond the bounds of this present inquiry, but has been addressed by Monika Schmitz-Emans in her *Poesie als Dialog: Vergleichende Studien zu Paul Celan und seinem literarischen Umfeld* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1993), pp. 181-233.

5 Conclusion

When read in the light of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', Celan's poem 'Die Halde' and his version of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105 posit both poetry and poetic translation as the site of a tension between identity and difference. The phrases 'anders von Mal zu Mal' and 'stets anders und stets das' from the translations, coupled with the temporary nature of the union in 'Die Halde' ('von Mal zu Mal', 'zuweilen'), suggest that this tension is not a lasting fusion of two disparate elements, but is rather a series of temporary moments of union between opposing realms, which generate a sustained tension. The poem 'In Eins' then illustrates this tension between identity and difference by implying that a poem may suggest specific points of reference at the same time as remaining permanently open to other impulses. Consequently, the poem constitutes a series of unique moments.

Celan's use of the metaphor of communicating vessels in his poetological notes and correspondence helps to conceptualise this tension, in that it portrays the poem as the site of ongoing communication between its manifest reality (the poem's text and its original composition) and what may be considered the poem's latent reality. According to Celan's comments on communicating vessels and on 'das Bewußtlose', this latent reality may be, on the one hand, the poet's and the reader's lived experience, and on the other, additional texts and writers. Crucially, Celan suggests that these encounters may take place in a realm that is separate from conscious poetic intention, so implying that there are unintentional and unconscious processes at work in poetic composition. Consequently, the poet may realise the existence of these intertexts only on reading the completed poem himself, and the retrospective recognition of these initially unknown impulses results in a new interpretation of the poem.

The notion that a text's meaning is constituted in part by its interaction with other texts is articulated in Celan's Büchner Prize speech through the metaphor of the meridian itself. Although references to 'das Bewußtlose' and to communicating vessels were omitted from the final version of that speech, access to Celan's draft versions and to his correspondence has shown that these ideas are integral to the idea of the meridian and so to the concept of shared poetic space. Indeed, their absence in the final version of the speech consigns these ideas themselves to a latent, spectral realm; for they are fundamental to the concepts discussed in the speech and yet not immediately discernible to a reader. When the meridian image is considered in the light of the metaphor of communicating vessels, it becomes apparent that this shared poetic space is not extrinsic to these texts, but is a third realm that is generated by the interaction of the two texts and that alters the meaning of each of them.

The tension between identity and difference that is inscribed in the series of 'in eins' poems is thus shown to result from the communication between the various intertextual layers of a poem. The programmatic poem 'In Eins' exhibits this communication by showing that a poem whose manifest reference points are indicated by conscious citation and allusion nevertheless remains open to the intrusion of other impulses and intertexts. The intrusion of these elements does not destroy or supplant the original text. Rather, these elements are integral to the original poem but are only actualised at the various points of its reception by the poet, readers, and translators.

Conclusion

In this study I have investigated Celan's reception of surrealism through an examination of his encounters with surrealist works between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. These moments of engagement with selected surrealist texts and theories suggest that Celan did not remain within the limits of the surrealist movement, allowing it to dominate his poetry and poetics, but neither do they amount to a complete disavowal of the movement. Rather, this study has shown that Celan appropriates certain elements of the surrealist discourse and incorporates them into his own theories.

Three levels of chronological development may be identified in this study of Celan's treatment of surrealist works. Firstly, the translations progress from homage (in the 1940s) to poetological recontextualisation (in the late 1950s). Secondly, a shift is perceptible within Celan's poetological consideration of the idea of communication within and between poems, as is evident in his changing response to the motif of communicating vessels. Thirdly, I have identified a change in Celan's portrayal of this poetic communication. In the early translations (such as those in *Surrealistische Publikationen*), the communication is between present linguistic expression and destructive impulses from the past, which threaten to overwhelm the original poem. Yet in the translations in the late 1950s, this communication is thematised as a condition of the poem's permanent difference, and therefore becomes a constructive factor.

A progression from homage to poetological translation is evident in a comparison of Celan's translations of Éluard's poems, from his versions from *Capitale de la douleur* in Chapter 3, to his translation of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' in Chapter 7. The translations

from *Capitale de la douleur* represent the first documented encounter of Celan with surrealism, and they show signs of the poet's attachment to surrealist theories and themes, including reflections of his involvement in surrealist activities such as 'Question-Réponse'. By contrast, Celan's gradual detachment from surrealism is mirrored in his translations of 'Nous avons fait la nuit' in 1956 and 1957. The differences between these versions in terms of their treatment of the surrealist features of the original poem and with regard to the poetological content of the German version suggests that the eighteen months between spring 1956 and winter 1957 pinpoint a fundamental transition within Celan's approach to translation. This change may be designated a shift from a view of translation as homage to that of translation as one instant in the permanent evolution of the literary text.

The second chronological development identified in this thesis is also concerned with the poetological import of Celan's writings. It traces the progression from an early poetological text, Celan's essay 'Edgar Jené', to his best-known poetological text, *Der Meridian*, along with the drafts, notes and correspondence from that era. In some respects, these texts are more indicative of continuity than evolution, since in Chapter 4 the theories expounded by Celan in 'Edgar Jené' are interpreted as analogous to those expressed by André Breton in *Les Vases communicants*; and in Chapter 8 I show that the image of communicating vessels was also fundamental to Celan's conception of the 'meridian' around 1960. Nonetheless, a development within this basic continuity is also evident. In 'Edgar Jené', the communication between the poetic text and past reality is implicitly destructive, associated with darkness, ash and death. Yet in Celan's comments on communicating vessels over a decade later, this interaction is celebrated as a condition of the poem's continued vitality and endurance.

This development from a destructive to a constructive view of poetic communication is mirrored in Celan's translations of surrealist poems during this decade, which posits a third kind of chronological development. The first translations after (or contemporary with) 'Edgar Jené' exemplify the idea of a sustained tension between two modes, which is akin to the structure expounded by Breton in *Les Vases communicants*. For example, in Celan's version of Césaire's poem, 'Habt kein Erbarmen mit mir', discussed in Chapter 5, the surrealist-inspired metaphors of the original poem are stripped back to reveal their non-metaphorical undertones. This version thus illustrates the extent to which new (and even contrary) meanings may be drawn out of an existing poem when it is received in a new context. Nevertheless, the effect of this addition of a non-metaphorical mode is almost exclusively destructive, in that it inscribes images of devastation into the otherwise optimistic poem.

Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate that by 1957 this notion of a sustained tension between disparate elements, which is exemplified in Celan's version of Césaire's poem, has become a central component of Celan's poetics. Celan's translations of poems by Robert Desnos and Éluard continue to illustrate this tension: in 'Das letzte Gedicht' through the thematisation of spectral doubles; and in 'Nous avons fait la nuit' through the juxtaposition of creation and destruction, such as in the shift from 'graver' to 'graben'. Here, the creativity implied in the French version, of engraving into a rock and therefore of artistic composition, is retained but simultaneously brought into the realm of death through the aural and visual evocation of the act of digging and a grave. In addition to this illustration, the tension between opposing elements is inscribed into the poem's structures, perhaps most compellingly in the French title of Celan's 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. The resulting bilingual nature of that new poem draws the original poem, with its connotative sphere, into the text. Thus the new version is neither an imitation of the

original poem, nor does it write over the original. Rather, the possibility for one poem to encompass a series of disparate elements is thematised in the poem itself, and as such the poem is rendered 'anders von Mal zu Mal'.

This proposition that the poem is defined by permanent flux is indicative of the concept of permanent difference, which arises from Celan's treatment of the surrealist ideal of permanent renewal. This notion reflects the surrealists' optimistic belief in the possibility of revolutionising human perception and therefore reality; and so by transforming it into an assertion of permanent difference, the points of convergence and divergence between Celan's poetics and surrealist theory become evident. On the one hand, Celan shares with the surrealists the recognition of correspondences between apparently disparate elements, exhibited for example in *Les Vases communicants* and in 'Edgar Jené'. Yet on the other hand, Celan's poetics do not allow for a surrealist celebration of renewal, since his understanding of communication includes the communication of the past with the present. Permanent renewal is therefore replaced by permanent difference.

In 'Edgar Jené', this communication with the past is represented as a dialogue between the speaker and the 'finstere Quellen', which, in particular in the surrealist context of Jené's lithographs, imply the dark sources of the unconscious mind. Nonetheless, the reading of *Les Vases communicants* in Chapter 4 in terms of Breton's reception of Freud's theory of the Unconscious has shown that Breton considered his theory to differ from Freud's. Breton's principal concern is with the idea of permanent communication between the unconscious and conscious mind, rather than a desire to cleanse the Unconscious, which he attributed to Freud. My analysis of 'Edgar Jené' has revealed that Celan appears to share this reformulation of Freudian theory into an assertion of ongoing communication between the conscious and unconscious spheres. And when Celan

returns to the metaphor of communicating vessels in the early 1960s, a similar commitment to the idea of an Unconscious, separate from Freudian theory, is again implicit. Rather than seeking to cleanse the Unconscious of its disruptive impulses, Celan explores ways in which a consideration of unconscious structures may inform his understanding of the nature of poetic expression. So, as discussed in Chapter 7, he seems to share Émile Benveniste's view that literary expression contains structures similar to the structures of the Unconscious identified by Freud, without concluding that these texts therefore arise from the Unconscious itself. Celan's dissociation of the term 'das Bewußtlose' from 'das Unbewußte', addressed in Chapter 8, similarly suggests that he postulates the existence of a space that is separate from the realm of conscious poetic intention, but that he did not restrict this to a Freudian view of the Unconscious.

This more open approach to the Unconscious allows Celan to consider how a poem may be understood to result from the intrusion of impulses beyond the poet's conscious intention. This intrusion is illustrated in the translations themselves, in part through the principle of semantic shifts. So for example in Celan's version of Césaire's poem, the new associations of racial heritage that arise from National Socialist racial laws bring new connotations into the original poem's celebration of 'négritude'. The analysis of Celan's version of the poem thought to be by Desnos, 'Le Dernier poème', has also demonstrated that a poem may evolve through the intrusion of contexts and elements unknown to the poet at the time. So the transformation of 'J'ai tant rêvé de toi' into the posthumous 'Le Dernier poème' infuses that first poem with intimations of the poet's death. These poems therefore exhibit the proposition that a poem always contains the potential for its future meanings, and so situates this latent potential within the poem itself.

The idea that such latent potential may be immanent in any poetic text is conceptualised as a textual Unconscious through the study of the metaphor of communicating vessels in Celan's poetics in Chapter 8. Celan implies that encounters between texts, such as those identified between Celan's own works and those of Büchner, may be neither random nor intentional, but rather evidence of the existence of invisible 'meridians' between writers. This shared poetic space impacts on the meanings of the texts themselves, but only when the points of contact are perceived by the reader, writer or translator. Since the translator is simultaneously both reader and writer, translation is privileged in Celan's comments on communicating vessels as the point where this shared space may become visible.

The resulting tension between the specific coordinates of a poem and its endless potential for additional connotations is itself articulated in Celan's insertion of the words 'hier' and 'jetzt' into his version of Éluard's 'Nous avons fait la nuit'. The contingency of these deictic terms characterises the poem as the act of gesturing towards something rather than attempting to represent it (deixis rather than mimesis). The resulting contingency of the poem means that it can always have new meanings attributed to it depending on the time and place of its reception. It can therefore remain the same text, yet also be different at any given time.

This study has therefore shown that it is possible to consider references to a textual Unconscious in Celan's poetics without this concept being subject to the limitations imposed on it by Freud or the surrealists, and therefore without suggesting that Celan's use of these ideas renders his work either 'Freudian' or 'surrealist'. Rather, I have found that Celan has integrated elements of Freudian psychoanalysis and of surrealist theory into his own work, so creating a Celanian conception of the Unconscious that is at once

unique and part of a chain of such considerations that reaches back to the Romantics and beyond.

That these insights into Celan's poetics may lead to new interpretations of his poetry is suggested by the following reading of a poem by Celan that was composed several years after the translations and poetological writings under discussion. This interpretation demonstrates that the foregoing study of a particular aspect of Celan's poetics between the late 1940s and the early 1960s has established a model for reading Celan's work that can be applied beyond this period in Celan's literary career. A reading of 'Ich trink Wein', written in 1969 (III, 108), is enriched by a consideration of the issues that have been drawn out in this thesis: Celan's encounter with surrealist poetry, the tension between identity and difference and the communicating vessels metaphor:

ICH TRINK WEIN aus zwei Gläsern
und zackere an
der Königszäsur
wie Jener
am Pindar,

Gott gibt die Stimmgabel ab
als einer der kleinen
Gerechten,

aus der Lostrommel fällt
unser Deut.

This poem has tended to be analysed in the context of Celan's reception of Friedrich Hölderlin's oeuvre, since the first stanza contains an allusion to the latter's translation of

poems by the Greek writer Pindar.¹ However, when read in the context of this study of Celan's reception of surrealism, 'Ich trink Wein' takes on a series of additional connotations, which substantially complement previous readings.

Readings to date of 'Ich trink Wein' have argued that it addresses on the one hand Hölderlin's approach to texts by Sophocles and Pindar, and on the other Jewish mystical beliefs. The idea of duality suggested both by the two glasses of the first line and by the evocation of a 'Königszäsur', which implies a separation of something into two units, is thought to refer to Hölderlin's commentary on one of Sophocles's plays, and to the Jewish mystical understanding of the separation between God and man. In Hölderlin's 'Anmerkungen' (1804) to his translations of two of Sophocles's plays, he describes the entrance of the blind seer Teiresias in the play *Oedipus der Tyrann* as a caesura. Since at this point in the play the king, a representative of mankind, encounters the seer, supposedly a divine representative, this 'caesura' may be understood to represent, *inter alia*, the separation of the divine and the human.

Such a division is also central to Jewish cabbalistic mysticism, within which the images of a crown and a king are representative of the highest manifestation of the divine, as distinct from the material world. Böschenstein and Pöggeler consequently read the reference to 'die kleinen Gerechten' in the second stanza as a continuation of the theme of Jewish divinity. According to the Jewish Talmud, 'the righteous' (in Hebrew, *Tzaddikim*) are a select group of individuals, at least thirty-six of whom are alive at any time, whose faith and piety are boundless. Hasidic Jews consider *Tzaddikim* to be

¹ See Böschenstein, 'Hölderlin und Celan', in Hamacher and Menninghaus, pp. 191-200; Pöggeler, 'Einleitung', in *Homburg von der Höhe in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte. Studien zum Freundeskreis um Hegel und Hölderlin*, ed. by Jamme and Pöggeler (Stuttgart: Klett, 1981), pp. 11-24; Klaus Manger, 'Die Königszäsur. Zu Hölderlins Gegenwart in Celans Gedicht', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, 23 (1982-83), 156-65; and Böschenstein, *Von Morgen nach Abend. Filiationen der Dichtung von Hölderlin zu Celan* (Munich: Fink, 2006), esp. pp. 322-36.

intermediaries between God and man.² Thus the image does seem to continue the theme of the relationship between God and man inferred from the first stanza, yet the modification of the righteous as ‘die kleinen Gerechten’ suggests a devaluation of that status. Böschstein maintains that this reduction of God leads to a decline in the worth of the human lot (indicated by the term ‘Lostrommel’), since it is aligned with a coin of meagre value (the ‘Deut’ is a Dutch coin of a very small denomination).³

However, the phrase ‘die kleinen Gerechten’ brings another dimension into the poem that is not mentioned by either Böschstein or Pöggeler and that opens up a new line of interpretation. As discussed in Chapter 3, ‘Die kleinen Gerechten’ is the title of Celan’s unpublished version of Éluard’s poem ‘Les Petits justes’, from *Capitale de la douleur*. ‘Ich trink Wein’ thus alludes to two particular translations, Hölderlin’s Pindar and Celan’s ‘Die kleinen Gerechten’, the first of which is described as the act of ‘zackern’. This archaic verb is defined as ‘pflügen’ in Grimms’ dictionary, originating from the phrase ‘zacker gën’ (‘zum Acker gehen’).⁴ Translation is thus related to ploughing, an analogy that has compelling connotations both of itself and within the wider context of Celan’s poetological writings. The metaphor requires that the original text (Pindar’s or Éluard’s) be viewed as a field, which is ploughed (dug into and turned over) by the translator in order to render it more fertile, ready for planting. What is to be cultivated there is not made explicit by the metaphor, but it could be several things at once: the new version of the translated text, the translator’s own poetry, and the German language itself. In ‘Ich trink Wein’, translation is thereby characterised as much more than a self-contained

² *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey Wigoder, 7th edn (New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1992), p. 934.

³ Böschstein, ‘Hölderlin und Celan’, p. 196.

⁴ Böschstein notes this archaic meaning, and also its connection to Hölderlin’s translation of Pindar. In 1805 a councillor in Homburg, where Hölderlin was resident, wrote to an acquaintance: ‘Hölderlin, der immer halbverrückt ist, zackert auch am Pindar.’ This letter is cited in Hölderlin’s *Sämtliche Werke*, 8 vols (Berlin: Propylaen, 1923), VI, 373, of which Celan owned a copy. Böschstein, ‘Hölderlin und Celan’, p. 191, and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, XV, 16-17.

exercise, concerning only the original text and the new version. Rather, it is described as an interaction between two discrete factors, the translator (the plough) and the original text (the field) in order to produce the conditions for a new language (the crop). The connection between this metaphor and Celan's citation of Mandelstam's description of poetry as a plough, in his radio essay, is self-evident, and suggests continuity in Celan's thought throughout the 1960s.

The analogy between ploughing and translation, and the attendant evocation of fertility and new growth through the excavation of an original, are rendered more compelling by an additional connotation of the noun 'Königszäsur'. This compound is composed of a reference to a regal figure and the evocation of an incision, since the noun 'Zäsur' is etymologically rooted in the Latin term 'caesura', which means 'Einschnitt'. Consequently, the neologism 'Königszäsur' corresponds semantically to the existing compound 'Kaiserschnitt', a caesarean section. This correspondence is compelling in the context of the poem's allusion to translation, for it portrays the translation process as resulting in a new birth, which nevertheless requires the violation (and potential destruction) of the original poem. The implications of fertility in the ploughing metaphor are thus allied with an indication of destruction that recalls the tension inscribed into Celan's translations, such as that between 'graver' and 'graben'.

Furthermore, the verb 'zackern' is significant not only for its meaning but also for its status as an archaic term. In relation to Celan's predilection for such words, Böschenstein states that Celan considered their usage in his poems to be akin to bringing unknown words home from a journey: 'Eine Reise, sagte er, dem Sinne nach, im Gespräch, sei oft

eine Gelegenheit, ungekannte Wörter nach Hause zu bringen.⁵ Translation, too, may be viewed as a process of bringing words home, in that the foreign words are rendered in the familiar, homely language. In this respect, Celan's use of the term 'zackern' also suggests a particular conception of translation. Again, its relation to his own poetics in 1960, this time to his association of poetic encounter and homecoming in *Der Meridian*, renders this poem a crystallisation of those earlier ideas.

Once the context of Celan's reception of surrealism has been introduced by the phrase 'Die kleinen Gerechten', other terms in 'Ich trink Wein' become meaningful in new ways. Böschstein relates the image of a tuning fork, 'die Stimmgabel', in the second stanza to the Heraclitean metaphor of the lyre and bow, as an expression of the harmony that can result from the tension between two opposing elements. As discussed in Chapter 4, André Breton quotes precisely this metaphor in the final section of *Les Vases communicants*, which provides a philosophical basis for his argument that the tension between disparate realms (principally, waking and sleeping reality) can be productive and creative. This notion of interaction between opposing realms, such that they create a single unit while still remaining different ('Einheit und Unterschiedenheit zugleich', in Böschstein's words) is thus central to Breton's theory of communicating vessels as well as to 'Ich trink Wein'.⁶ Moreover, a tuning fork standing upright on a wooden box (a 'resonance box', used to amplify the sound), resembles both the outline of a wine glass, so recalling the poem's title, as well as communicating vessels themselves. The two prongs of that fork that, when struck, initially sound one tone with a series of overtones, before modulating within seconds to one constant pitch, thereby represent the tuning-in that is evoked in

⁵ Böschstein, 'Hölderlin und Celan', p. 191.

⁶ Ibid., p. 196.

Celan's version of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', and that foregrounds the wider concern with the tension between unity and difference in Celan's poetics.

The final stanza of 'Ich trink Wein' may also be read in view of the naming of 'Die kleinen Gerechten' and its status as a translated surrealist poem. While the 'Lostrommel' and the term 'Deut' may indeed suggest the devaluation of the human 'lot' as a result of the reduction of God to one of the 'kleinen Gerechten', in the context of surrealism the allusion to gambling and interpretation ('Deutung') takes on additional connotations. As discussed in Chapter 8, Celan associated the surrealist movement in particular with gambling, so celebrating the principle of permanent potential that the movement represents. The idea that God may relinquish the 'Stimmgabel' implies the absence of a divine standard, such that interpretations are released from any anchorage and so become arbitrary. The final lines of 'Ich trink Wein' seem to reflect this association of meaning and arbitrariness: 'aus der Lostrommel fällt / unser Deut'. The lack of agency indicated by the verb 'fallen', as opposed to a lot being drawn by choice from a drum, intensifies this impression of randomness. The poem thus closes with an ambivalent assertion of the arbitrary nature of interpretation.

The allusion to 'Deutung' in the word 'Deut' also reflects the association of currency and signification that has been identified in Celan's version of Éluard's poem 'Pablo Picasso', in the same collection as 'Les Petits justes' and also discussed in Chapter 3. In line three of that version, 'Blickst du durch den Demanten, ist alle Münze falsch', the coin represents inauthentic signification in that it is endless reproducible, while the refraction of light through the diamond is privileged as a vision that is both unique and ever-changing. In 'Ich trink Wein', the fact that the coin falls from the 'Lostrommel' associates it more closely with apparently random signification than with the endless reproduction

of fixed meanings. Consequently, the 'Deut' as 'Deutung' is re-evaluated as representative of the permanent potential suggested by the image of the diamond, and which Celan identified in the surrealist movement through the phrase 'Les jeux ne sont pas encore faits'. So the loss of a universal standard, through the surrender of the 'Stimmgabel', is represented as the liberation of interpretation from one single fixed meaning, valorised by Celan in his poetics through his celebration of permanent difference.

The series of new connotations that the poem 'Ich trink Wein' takes on when considered in the context of Celan's reception of surrealism ultimately impacts on the image in the title itself. That the speaker drinks wine from two glasses is not only, as Böschstein and Pöggeler have argued, a representation of the human and divine realms. The opening statement also functions as the poet's avowal of his own literary heritage. To drink wine from two glasses is to imbibe two separate liquids from two different vessels, and to combine them in one's own body. The parallel to the image of communicating vessels is compelling and imparts new meaning to the poem. In his discussion of his translation of Esenin's poem, addressed in Chapter 8, Celan suggests that his version has its own set of literary and historical coordinates, as well as those related to his life experience, and conceptualises this interrelationship as akin to communicating vessels: 'communiquant à travers la vie.' Similarly, in 'Ich trink Wein' the poet uses an image like the communicating vessels to describe the nature of his reception of other texts. Referring indirectly to two of his literary predecessors, he indicates that his reception of their work is a process of assimilation, of drinking from each vessel in order to incorporate them anew into his own body of work.

This image of the poet's body itself as the base of the communicating vessels, in which the two substances intermingle, parallels Breton's assertion in *Les Vases communicants* that

the tension between the two opposing spheres may be encapsulated in poetry. Moreover, it recalls Celan's own concept of the essentially personal nature of poetry, in that it is written 'unter dem besonderen Neigungswinkel einer Existenz'.⁷ The tripartite image in 'Ich trink Wein' thereby exhibits how this intensely personal, individual expression may simultaneously incorporate both known and unknown impulses, such that these impulses become integral parts of that individual voice.

On this reading, 'Ich trink Wein' recalls Celan's discussion of shared poetic space, as characterised by the images of the meridian and of communicating vessels, in his poetological writings around 1960. This comparison of the poem with the ideas in *Der Meridian* comes close to Klaus Manger's interpretation of that poem. Manger also considers the poem to refer primarily to Hölderlin, but notes that the first stanza asserts a similarity and a difference between that poet and the speaker. The speaker designates himself 'wie Jener', but the difference arises from their actions: one 'zackert' at Pindar, the other at 'der Königszäsur'. Manger therefore singles out the 'Königszäsur' as a central motif, arguing that it represents the focus of the poet's activity. Again, Heraclitus's concept of the harmony of opposites is evoked, this time as indicated by the caesura, which simultaneously separates and binds. He compares the 'Königszäsur' to Celan's 'meridian' image, in that they both represent truth ('die Wahrheitslinie'), and thereby suggest that truth is constituted of oppositions. On this account, the poet's role is to aim for the unity of truth through the process of 'Zackern'.⁸ Like Manger's, my reading of 'Ich trink Wein' has drawn parallels between the poem's imagery and that of the meridian metaphor. However, while Manger's interpretation assumes that there exists one single truth, which the poet may aspire to attain, Celan's evocation of the meridian image in his

⁷ Harry Neumann, p. 5.

⁸ Manger, pp. 158-60.

Büchner Prize Speech suggests otherwise. In that speech, Celan refers not to 'den Meridian', which would suggest the existence of one specific 'Wahrheitslinie', but to 'einen Meridian' (III, 202), implying that he has discovered one of many possible meridians. Such an interpretation also corresponds to the geographical significance of the 'meridian'. In line with this understanding of the meridian metaphor, this thesis has demonstrated that Celan's poetics suggest the opposite of Manger's interpretation: that according to Celan's poetics, what may be perceived as 'truth' is contingent and in flux, defined by permanent difference.

Finally, two related conclusions may be drawn regarding the bearing of this thesis on a view of Celan as a post-Holocaust poet. Firstly, the sustained tension between celebration and destruction exhibited in Celan's German versions of the French poems indicates that the violation of language brought about by the Holocaust has rendered any straightforward expression of hope or optimism impossible without an accompanying reminder of the past (and potential for future) destruction. Yet secondly, Celan's poetological writings suggest that the demand never to forget the past has become a linguistic imperative, and that the idea that language is affected by real events has come to be associated with enrichment as well as violation. The implication is that the linguistic 'Unconscious' is not only disruptive through its intrusion into current expression, but may also be harnessed and celebrated as a mode of ensuring that expression remains in permanent flux, and therefore vital and enduring. Consequently, Celan's play with accepted linguistic structures, his fragmentation and disruption of conventional expression in his poetry, need not be seen solely as an indication of the violation of language. This idiosyncratic use of language is also an affirmation of the endless possibilities presented by a language that is constantly interacting with memories and experiences beyond itself.

Appendices

These appendices contain all the texts to which I refer substantially in this thesis, but which are not included in Celan's *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*.

Appendix to Chapter 3

Éluard, 'Les Petits justes' (1926)¹

I

Sur la maison du rire
Un oiseau rit dans ses ailes.
Le monde est si léger
Qu'il n'est plus à sa place
Et si gai
Qu'il ne lui manque rien.

II

Pourquoi suis-je si belle?
Parce que mon maître me lave.

III

Avec tes yeux je change comme avec les lunes
Et je suis tour à tour et de plomb et de plume,
Une eau mystérieuse et noire qui t'enserre
Ou bien dans tes cheveux ta légère victoire.

IV

Une couleur madame, une couleur monsieur,
Une aux seins, une aux cheveux,
La bouche des passions
Et si vous voyez rouge

¹ Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 151-152 and 173-74.

La plus belle est à vos genoux.

V

A faire rire la certaine,
Était-elle en Pierre?
Elle s'effondra.

VI

Le monstre de la fuite hume même les plumes
De cet oiseau roussi par le feu du fusil.
Sa plainte vibre tout le long d'un mur de larmes
Et les ciseaux des yeux coupent la mélodie
Qui bourgeonnait déjà dans le coeur du chasseur.

VII

La nature s'est prise aux filets de ta vie.
L'arbre, ton ombre, montre sa chair nue: le ciel.
Il a le voix du sable et les gestes du vent.
Et tout ce que tu dis bouge derrière toi.

VIII

Elle se refuse toujours à se comprendre, à entendre,
Elle rit pour cacher sa terreur d'elle-même.
Elle a toujours marché sous les arches des nuits
Et partout où elle a passé
Elle a laissé
L'empreinte des choses brisées.

IX

Sur le ciel délabré, sur ces vitres d'eau douce,
Quel visage viendra, coquillage sonore,
Annoncer que la nuit de l'amour touché au jour,
Bouche ouverte liée à la bouche fermée.

X

Inconnue, elle était ma forme préférée,
Celle qui m'enlevait le souci d'être un homme,
Et je la vois et je la perds et je subis
Ma douleur, comme un peu de soleil dans l'eau froide

XI

Les hommes qui changent et se ressemblent
Ont, au cours de leurs jours, toujours fermé les yeux
Pour dissiper la brume de la derision
Etc...

Appendix to Chapter 6

Desnos, 'Apparition' (1934)²

Né de la boue, jailli au ciel, plus flottant qu'un nuage, plus dur que le marbre,
Né de la joie, jailli du sommeil, plus flottant qu'une épave, plus dur qu'un coeur,
Né de son coeur, jailli du ciel, plus flottant que le sommeil, plus dur que le ciel,
Né, jailli, flottant plus dur et plus ciel, et plus coeur et plus marbre,
Et plus sommeil et plus de nuage et plus ciel, et plus coeur et plus marbre,
Et plus de sommeil et plus de nuage et plus d'épave, et tant et plus,
Mais du sommeil flottant au coeur des marbres disperses comme des épaves,
Au long du ciel d'un pauvre paysage jaillissant et flottant comme un coeur...
Et saignant, oh saignant, saignant tellement
Que tant de marbres, abandonnés, alignés, dressés comme jaillis,
Finiront bien par flotter comme des épaves.
Mais il ne s'agit plus de flotter, ni de jaillir, ni de durcir,
Mais, de toute boue,
Faire un ciment, un marbre, un ciel, un nuage et une joie et une épave
Et un coeur, cela va de soi, et tout ce qui est dit plus haut
Et un sommeil, un beau sommeil, un bon sommeil,
Un bon sommeil de boue
Né du café et de la nuit et du charbon et de l'encre et du crêpe des veuves
Et de cent millions de nègres
Et de l'étreinte de deux nègres dans une ombre de sapins
Et de l'ébène et des multitudes de corbeaux sur les carnages...
Tel qu'enfin s'épanouisse, recouvrant l'univers,
Un bouquet, un immense bouquet de roses rouges.

² Desnos, *Œuvres*, p. 922.

Desnos, 'Fête-diable' (1934)³

La dernière goutte de vin s'allume au fond du verre où vient d'apparaître un
château.

Les arbres noueux du bord de la route s'inclinent vers le voyageur.

Il vient du village proche,

Il vient de la ville lointaine,

Il ne fait passer au pied des clochers.

Il aperçoit à la fenêtre une étoile rouge qui bouge,

Qui descend, qui se promène en vacillant

Sur la route blanche, dans la campagne noire.

Elle se dirige vers le voyageur qui la regarde venir.

Un instant elle brille dans chacun de ses yeux,

Elle se fixe sur son front.

Étonné de cette lueur glaciale dans chacun de ses yeux,

Elle se fixe sur son front.

Une goutte de vin perle à son doigt.

Maintenant l'homme s'éloigne et s'amoindrit dans la nuit.

Il est passé près de cette source où vous venez au matin cueillir le cresson frais,

Il est passé près de la maison abandonnée.

C'est l'homme à la goutte de vin sur le front.

Il danse à l'heure actuelle dans une salle immense,

Une salle brillamment éclairée,

Resplendissante de son parquet ciré

Profond comme un miroir.

Il est seul avec sa danseuse

Dans cette salle immense, et il danse

Au son d'un orchestre de verre pile.

Et les créatures de la nuit

Contemplant ce couple solitaire et qui danse

Et la plus belle d'entre les créatures de la nuit

Essuie machinalement une goutte de vin à son front,

La remet dans un verre,

Et le dormeur s'éveille.

³ Desnos, *Œuvres*, p. 930.

Voit la goutte briller de cent mille rubis dans le verre
La contemple.
L'univers oscille durant une seconde de silence
Et le sommeil reprend ses droits,
Et l'univers reprend son cours
Par les milliers de routes blanches tracées par le monde
A travers les campagnes ténébreuses.

Desnos, 'Jamais d'autre que toi' (1930)⁴

Jamais d'autre que toi en dépit des étoiles et des solitudes
En dépit des mutilations d'arbre à la tombée de la nuit
Jamais d'autre que toi ne poursuivra son chemin qui est le mien
Plus tu t'éloignes et plus ton ombre s'agrandit
Jamais d'autre que toi ne saluera la mer à l'aube quand fatigué d'errer moi
sorti de forêts ténébreuses et des buissons d'orties je marcherai vers
l'écume
Jamais d'autre que toi ne posera sa main sur mon front et mes yeux
Jamais d'autre que toi et je nie le mensonge et l'infidélité
Ce navire à l'ancre tu peux couper sa corde
Jamais d'autre que toi
L'aigle prisonnier dans une cage ronge lentement les barreaux de cuivre vert-de-
grisés
Quelle évasion!
C'est le dimanche marqué par le chant des rossignols dans les bois d'un vert
tendre l'ennui des petites filles en présence d'une cage où s'agite un serin
tandis que dans la rue solitaire le soleil lentement déplace de ligne mince
sur le trottoir chaud
Nous passerons d'autres lignes
Jamais jamais d'autre que toi
Et moi seul seul seul comme le lierre fané des jardins de banlieue seul comme
le verre
Et toi jamais d'autre que toi.

⁴ Desnos, *Œuvres*, pp. 563-64.

Appendix to Chapter 7

Drafts of Celan's translations of 'Nous avons fait la nuit', dated 24 December 1957.

(1)

Die Nacht ist begangen, ich halt deine Hand,
ich wache, ich ~~halt~~ **stütz** dich
mit all meinen Kräften.
Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte
Stern in den Gestein: hier soll
deines Leibes Gütigsein aufgehen. Ich sage mir deine
Stimmen vor, die heimliche und
die von allen gehörte.
Ich lache: ich seh dich
zur Stolzen sein, als bettelte sie, ich seh dich
den Irren Ehrfurcht bezeigen, den Schlichten
dich nähern, wie um zu baden.
Leise
stimm ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimm
sie ~~ab auf die~~ **in eins mit der** Nacht und fühl, wie ein Wunder, dahinter: du wirst
mir zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir, du ~~bist~~ gleichst
allem Geliebten, du bist
~~jedesmal anders und neu~~ **von Mal zu Mal**.

24.xii.57

(2)

Die Nacht ist begangen, ich halt deine Hand,
ich wache, ich stütz dich
mit all meinen Kräften.

Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte
Stern in ~~Gestein~~ **den Stein**: deines ~~Leibes~~ **Körpers**

Gütigsein ~~soll~~ – **hier**

~~hier aufgehen~~ **soll es keimen und aufgehen.**

Ich sage mir deine Stimmen vor, beide, die heimliche und
die von allen gehörte.

Ich lache, ich seh dich

~~zur~~ **der** Stolzen ~~sein~~ **begegnen**, als bettelte sie, ich seh dich, du bringst

den ~~Irren~~ **Umnachteten** Ehrfurcht entgegen, du gehst

zu den ~~Schlichten, wie um zu baden~~ **Einfachen hin – du badest.**

Leise

stimm ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimm sie in eins mit der Nacht, fühl jetzt

das Wunder dahinter: du wirst mir

zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir, du gleichst

allem Geliebten, du bist

anders von Mal zu Mal.

/24.12.57/

(3)

Paul Éluard

NOUS AVONS FAIT LA NUIT

Die Nacht ist begangen, ich halt deine Hand,

ich wache, ich stütz dich

mit all meinen Kräften.

Ich grabe, tiefes Gefurch, deiner Kräfte

Stern in Gestein: deines ~~Leibes~~ **Körpers**

Gütigsein ~~soll~~ – **hier**

hier aufgehen

soll s keimen und aufgehen

Ich sage mir deine

Stimmen vor, beide, die heimliche und

die von allen gehörte.

Ich lache, ich seh dich

~~zur~~ **der** Stolzen ~~sein~~ **begegnen**, als bettelte sie, ich seh dich, du bringst

den ~~Iren~~ **Umnachteten** Ehrfurcht entgegen, du gehst

zu den Schlichten, ~~wie um zu baden~~ - **du badest tauchst du badest in ein Bad.**

Leise

stimm ich die Stirn jetzt ab auf die deine, stimm sie

in eins mit der Nacht, fühl jetzt

das Wunder dahinter: du wirst mir

zur Unbekannt-Fremden, du gleichst dir, du gleichst

allem Geliebten, du bist

anders von Mal zu Mal.

/24.12.57/

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